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REPARATION







REPARATION

A Novel

BY

ADELINE SERGEANT

AUTHOR OF

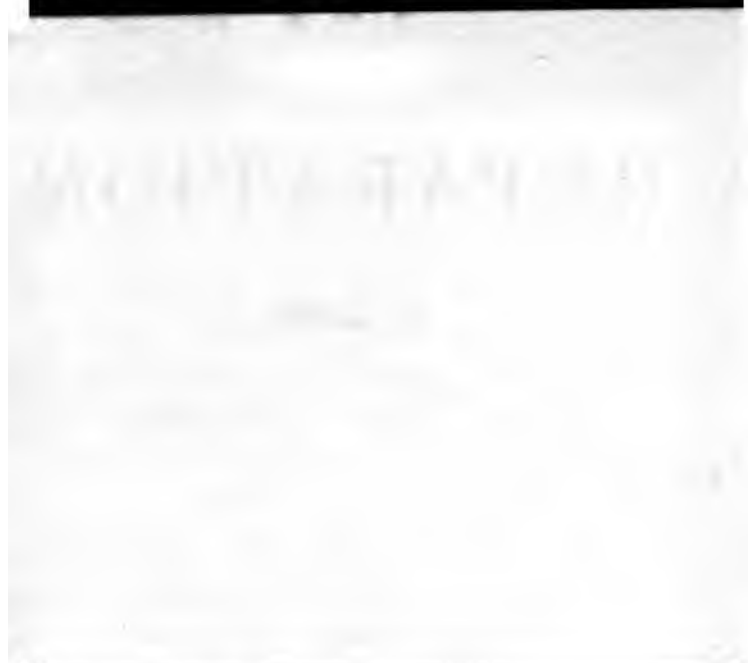
"THE MARRIAGE OF LYDIA MAINWARING," "THE SIXTH SENSE," ETC.

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CHAPTER I

AMONG THE HILLS

"WELL, Julian, here I am!"

The lithe, smooth-faced, astute-looking middle-aged man in orthodox London costume, tall hat, frock coat, immaculate gloves and boots, had apparently little in common with the roughly-clad country lad whom he addressed. Yet the relationship was of the closest; for they were father and son.

Godwin Scarsdale was said to be one of the most acute financiers of his time. He had concerned himself a good deal with the floating of companies, and he was reputed to have made a fortune in South Africa, where he had for a long time formed one of the inner ring of speculators, and invested a large amount of capital in mines. But he had so

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many irons in the fire that it was difficult to know where he lost and where he gained ; and his visits to England were few and far between ; for he was on the whole less concerned with English speculations than with those of other countries, and spent his time chiefly in Paris when business did not call him to Kimberley or Cape Town.

Some persons set about a rumour, to his possible prejudice, that he was a Jew by race ; he had a beak-like nose, deep-set dark eyes, and crisp black hair, which seemed to suggest a Semitic origin. But these persons were wrong : Godwin Scarsdale was of British birth and parentage, and his harsh features

genial individual in general society ; it was only when he met with opposition, or affairs did not run straight, that the angles of his private personality made themselves felt and seen.

It would be wrong to say that his son Julian proved his chief interest in life ; he was actuated by too many motives, and had too many objects and activities, to feel that one boy alone was a sufficient reason for living ; but at the same time, Julian's existence certainly made a tremendous difference to him, and was, indeed, the centre of his hopes and plans. He seldom sat down to think continuously about his son, but his mind glanced off towards him a score of times a day, and at the most unlikely moments ; a fact which in the case of a very busy man betokened a good deal of paternal affection.

Julian's mother, an exceptionally beautiful woman, whom he had wooed and won in open defiance of her family, had died when the child was born ; and it was after Julia's death that he had plunged into the world of speculation in which he had been so marvellously, so brilliantly successful. The boy had been left at home, in the wilds of Cumberland, to grow up as best he could in the care, first of a nurse, then of a private tutor. It had never occurred to

Scarsdale to send his son to school. He had a genuine contempt for Eton and Harrow, believing that these eminent centres of education produced the sort of man he hated: the trifler, the idler, the dandy, and the sportsman. He did not want his son to play games, he sometimes said; he wanted him to possess a sound education, and not grow up "too fine" to take life "by the right handle." But whether the education that Julian actually received was of a kind to satisfy his father was, however, an open question, not to be answered save with the passage of years.

Scarsdale had retained the ownership of a small

bitter contempt. The desire to make money was incomprehensible to him ; and the methods of the Stock Exchange savoured in his eyes of dishonesty. He and his forbears loved indeed to save money, to earn it painfully and to hoard it in secret places ; but to throw away money on a chance, to hazard it on some mysterious rise or fall in stocks, seemed to old John Scarsdale a positive wickedness. So, while the old man lived, Godwin absented himself from Scarsdale Tower ; and it was only when his father died that he married, and tried to make a home for himself. But this aim was frustrated ; and after Julia's death he broke up his London household, sent the baby to Scarsdale Tower with a nurse, and began the nomadic style of life which he had adopted ever since.

And Julian ? Sometimes Scarsdale scarcely knew what to make of him : the unlikeness to himself seemed at times quite appalling, although, at other moments, he was relieved at being able to trace some resemblance to old John Scarsdale, and thence to the family in general. But Julian was a trifle unsatisfactory to his father—in spite of being also the very apple of his eye.

“Well, Julian, here I am,” said the father cheerily.

He had not seen his son for some six months or more.

Julian had swung himself down from the fork of a tree in the garden, before he could make any very coherent response. It was an old oak tree, short and sturdy, with its branches twisted all one way out of shape by the sharp easterly winds; and out of the crooked branches he had made a sylvan seat for himself high up among the indented leaves. He let himself down, hand over head, with marvellous ease and agility, and his father's eye surveyed him with a look of pride.

Scarsdale looked him over with approval. He had found that a tough physique, such as he himself possessed, had won him many a victory in the battle of life ; and he had determined that Julian should have this advantage, if none other, in the days of his youth. He had had masters brought from the nearest large towns to teach his son how to use his limbs, and he had paid far more attention to the details of his physical training than of his mental or moral discipline. Fortunately, Julian had a tutor in the person of the old Vicar of the parish, who could teach him something about the higher and more spiritual side of life.

Scarsdale might well be satisfied. The lad was strong, vigorous and manly ; and he had withal a very striking face. In his childhood it had been as beautiful as an angel's, and it still possessed an unusual purity of line and a sweetness of expression which is not often found in the eyes and lips of a boy of eighteen. But there was a slight hardening of the cheek, a bend in the eyebrow, which gave character while it detracted from the old boyish beauty ; and Mr. Scarsdale was not displeased to see the change. It was a relief to him to notice less likeness to Julia's dead face, and the increasing

decision in the lines of Julian's features gave it a manliness which was good to see.

"I'm awfully glad to see you again, daddy," said the lad—and his voice was as blithe and boyish as ever. "I would have come to meet you if I had known the train."

"Just as well you did not; I don't like being met. You look well, I'm glad to see; but pale. I expected to see you more tanned. I hope you are out of doors as much as possible."

"Practically all day. The Vicar and I do our reading out of doors even. He's quite in sympathy with us on the subject of fresh air."

"What a horrible thought!" said the lad, with a shudder. "More speed means more worry, more distraction, more noise; less time and opportunity for all the higher things of life."

"What are they, I wonder?" said his father, with a smile. "As you grow older, you will find that all the things you do are very much alike. But you are at the age to be a dreamer and an enthusiast, I suppose."

He said it good-humouredly, so that Julian did not feel hurt, although he was checked in the remarks he had been ready to make. He walked silently at his father's side, and together they roamed from the garden to the plantation, and out upon the bare hill-side. Deep in a nook of purple shadow, a light seemed to gleam upon them like a signal lamp; it was the sunshine reflected in one of the Vicarage windows, and it brought the Vicar to Mr. Scarsdale's mind.

"I must see your tutor," he said. "Has he a good report to give?"

"I hope so. But he says you asked him for a monthly report, which he despatches with the greatest regularity," Julian mentioned, with a fleeting smile.

"So he does. But I haven't always time to read it. The worthy Vicar is sometimes a trifle prolix, as even you must acknowledge, Julian."

"He's the dearest old chap in the world," said Julian, with a touch of heat in his voice.

"Just so—just so. I'm very fond of old Tarrant myself," said Mr. Scarsdale, with almost a caressing hand on his son's shoulder. But Julian was conscious of the patronage which the words expressed, and dimly resented it. At the same time, he was shocked to find his father and himself so little in accord. It seemed to him that Mr. Scarsdale was changed—hardened, perhaps even coarsened by

have talked to him. You can amuse yourself elsewhere, I suppose, while he gives me half an hour in the study?"

"I'll sit with Mrs. Tarrant, if she is well enough to see visitors."

They tramped onward, exchanging questions and answers now and then, but hardly speaking as though they were altogether congenial souls. Julian felt a kind of embarrassment, a sort of *gêne* which was not shared by his father; for Godwin Scarsdale was too much a man of the world to expect perfect congeniality from anyone; and at that moment he had many things to consider beside the difference of his own temperament from that of his son. He asked at once for Mr. Tarrant when the Vicarage was reached, and did not so much as mention the Vicar's invalid wife, whom Julian found in the drawing-room in a sociable mood. In half-an-hour's time, however, the two men came in together, and Julian was quick to note that his father was smiling and suave, while Mr. Tarrant's face was dark with distress, or anger, or doubt. The father and son stayed for a short time only, and then walked back to the town through a world that was rapidly losing its lovely tints of colour in the dusk of a fair June day.

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"Poor old Tarrant!" said Mr. Scarsdale reflectively. "He was rather cut up by what I had to tell him. It seems he hadn't thought of losing you."

"Of losing *me*?"

"You don't suppose I could leave you in this God-forsaken hole much longer, do you?" said Scarsdale. "I have been planning your future for the last six months, and I should have come home sooner if I could have got away. You are too old for Tarrant and the Dales, my boy; you want a wider sphere."

Julian's heart-beats quickened; he was impressionable, and his father's words thrilled one half of

poetry, the classics. You think them attractive ; but they have little or no value in the world of men. I want you by-and-by to be my helper ; and my helper must be a practical man."

"I'm afraid," said Julian, with a troubled brow, "that I shall never be such a helper as you require. I am not practical, I believe—"

"You will learn ; that is why you want some of the exact sciences. You are desultory and inaccurate. A few years' training in scientific work, and you will become another man."

Julian started and shrank into himself. Another man ; and what sort of man would that be ?

"Tarrant tells me that your brain-power is almost abnormal," said Mr. Scarsdale, with a little smile. "He thinks you will have little difficulty in acquiring all that I want you to know. But perhaps he hardly estimates the range taken by chemistry and similar sciences. Metallurgy—I should like you to be proficient in metallurgy and in geology. They are objects which would be useful."

"But where am I to go to learn all these things ?"

"To Germany, as I said. Bonn first, I think : afterwards I shall make further arrangements. You should be ready to start in September : that gives you

three months or so for getting up your German. I will write full particulars."

"And how long shall I stay?" said Julian, in a somewhat reluctant voice.

"Oh, three or four years! Let me see: you are now nearly nineteen, are you not? I should hardly think you would be qualified to join me at the Cape under three years, perhaps four."

"But what should I do there?" cried Julian.

"I should find you plenty of work," said his father, with a grim smile. "You needn't be afraid of idleness when you are with me. There is prospecting to be done; and you want a knowledge of a good many

"I would rather pursue knowledge for the sake of knowledge. I should like a fellowship at Oxford."

"Pooh! that is not my idea at all," said Scarsdale roughly. "I want my son to uphold my name, and, if possible, to get back the old estate, which long ago passed out of our hands. I have looked forward for years, Julian, to the time when my son would help me in my task."

The touch of pleading in the last words silenced Julian's objections. His generous spirit felt that it would not do to draw back. He spoke impulsively.

"I'll do what I can to help you, father."

"Right, boy! I knew you were a chip of the old block, after all."

Then he hesitated for a few minutes, and spoke at last in a rather doubtful tone.

"The first thing I want you to do is to look out for a young fellow called Carrington — Noel Carrington," he said, "and make friends with him if you can. I know his father; and it would be—well, something of an advantage to me if you were friendly with his son."

"Certainly, I'll do my best," said Julian, and his destiny was from that moment decided, although he knew it not.

CHAPTER II

OUT IN THE WORLD

"I SAY, Carrington has had some bad news."

"Money?"

"Well, yes; they say he has lost every penny—
some company or other has failed, and taken every

President of this rotten company which has come to grief. I suppose he's ruined too—"

"That's rough on you, old chap."

"I don't mind that so much; but I've just had an English paper describing the crash. It seems that two or three other companies are involved, and there's wide-spread ruin and desolation—the papers are dealing out blame with their usual irresponsibility, and of course some of it is falling on the wrong shoulders—"

"I see," said Englefield gravely.

He stood and looked at Julian for a moment or two as if he could read his very soul. There was a peculiarly penetrating, magnetic quality about his glance, and although he was still young he was already beginning to understand its quality of probing the hearts of men. He was a little man too, who, without those piercing eyes, might have been deemed insignificant; and Julian Scarsdale, who moved restlessly under his gaze, was a giant, well over six foot six, and of magnificent physique. But for the moment he writhed under the little doctor's inspection as though he were a prisoner before his judge.

"I see," said Englefield again. "You believe in your father."

"Naturally. He has an unblemished reputation," said Julian, almost violently. "Why should you ask?"

"And he is a rich man?"

"He was—I daresay he is now as poor as Carrington."

Englefield drew in his lips and smiled a little.

"That remains to be seen, of course. Sometimes the officials of a company don't suffer so much as the minor investors—"

amongst each other; and as for these German fellows—”

“They’ll have to eat a yard of my sword if they vilify any honest Englishman,” said Julian.

“Here, I wouldn’t discuss the matter with Carrington. He seems to have gone off his head altogether.”

“You’re beastly offensive, Englefield,” said young Scarsdale, with some stiffness. “I hope you don’t know what you are implying at every second word you utter.”

“Rubbish!” said the doctor. “I am only trying to give you a word of friendly caution. Don’t emulate the prickly porcupine.”

But after casting a carefully careless glance at Julian’s rigid mouth, he frowned a little, as though he was not satisfied with what he saw. Certainly more was expressed by those eagle eyes and that high-featured, olive-tinted face than would have been safe to put into words. He could only hope that no provocation would bring that hidden fire to the surface.

He had entered Julian’s rooms in order to bring him the news of Carrington’s ruin, and also because he was wishful to know whether the chairman of

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the company, now execrated from one end of England to the other, was young Scarsdale's relation : he was genuinely sorry to find that the notorious swindler (as the papers called him) was Julian's father. And he was desperately afraid lest some chance word should expose the situation to his English and German comrades, who would probably make common cause against him, and goad him by their sneers to absolute madness.

It was four years since Julian had been sent to Germany ; and he had only once visited his old home during that time. At first he had hungered

practical, matter-of-fact. Of late he had been almost daily expecting a summons to South Africa ; and he was looking forward to becoming his father's secretary and assistant, although he scarcely knew what were the directions in which his activity would be required.

And now a thunderbolt had fallen out of the blue.

Instead of going out to his father, and working happily at his side, it seemed to Julian that he would have to toil for his daily bread. Of course his father was ruined ; he took that for granted. It was not possible that a number of people should have lost all their money through a swindling company, and that his father should remain wealthy. The natural course (thought Julian, who was not yet hardened to the ways of the world) was to divide one's wealth in order to benefit those whom one had (even accidentally) injured. He expected to receive a letter giving some explanation of the catastrophe, and asking him, perhaps, to help his father to retrieve a great error. But that Godwin Scarsdale should be what he really was—a hardened money-grubber, without touch of compassion for the poor, without a thought of pity for those he ruined—this was a thing which Julian found impossible to contemplate. His father might be ruined, penniless, and Julian would

feel no shame ; but he flinched at the merest shadow of disgrace.

And to think that the blow had fallen also upon Noel Carrington !

When Mr. Scarsdale first spoke to his son about the German University which he had chosen as the scene of the lad's scientific training, he had mentioned young Carrington, and had desired Julian to make friends with him. It had not been very easy for Julian to obey his father in this respect. Noel Carrington was not the sort of young man with whom Julian easily got on. He was a trifler, an idler, a frivolous dissipated seeker after pleasure

was fixed for that very night—not six hours after the terrible news of his father's ruin had been brought to the young man's ears.

"Shall you go to the supper?" a friend asked him, rather doubtfully.

"Go to the supper? Of course I shall," said Carrington, in a sort of shriek. "Why not, you fool? why not?"

The fool who had spoken shrugged his shoulders and said no more.

Dr. Englefield tried persuasion to the same effect upon Julian, but equally in vain.

"And why should I not go to the supper?" said Julian, staring at him. "Do you expect me to look as if I were ashamed of my father?"

"Surely it is a little awkward — seeing that Carrington's lost everything," said the doctor.

"The fortunes of war," said Julian, so calmly that Englefield felt it was useless to say anything more.

But in the end, Julian was not present until the solid German banquet was nearly ended; for he had received a batch of papers and letters from England that had sent him nearly mad with indignant rage. His state of mind probably contributed to the event that followed; for he was

certainly quite sober, while Carrington was wild with drink.

When Julian entered the room at a restaurant where the banquet had been held, some of the guests had already left, and those who remained had been, for the most part, drinking heavily. Dr. Englefield was perfectly sober, and so was Carrington's friend the Count de Ruvigny. He was a young Belgian noble with whom Carrington had lately made an alliance, but for whom Julian cherished a peculiar detestation. He knew details concerning de Ruvigny's private life which caused him to dislike the man.

"To whom are you speaking?" said Julian sternly; while the students listened and gaped, ignorant of English, but scenting a fray.

"To you, you hound!" shrieked Carrington; and then, with livid face and starting eyes, he launched a beaker of beer full into Julian's face.

In a minute the room was in an uproar. But the commotion did not last long, for the rules of the student community were strict, and by all the customs of the society it was decided that a duel was inevitable. The only points to be fixed were the names of the seconds, the weapons, the time of meeting. These Julian scornfully referred to Dr. Englefield, who had volunteered to be his second: the Count de Ruvigny performed the same office for Carrington.

"What rubbish it is," said the doctor impatiently. "Can't Carrington apologise and let the thing be patched up?"

"You forget," said Julian drily, "that I could not accept an apology."

"I did not think you were bloodthirsty."

"I hope I am not. But I intend to punish Master Carrington for his insolence."

Englefield screwed up his mouth. "Is it worth while?"

"My father's name? I think so," said Julian; and the doctor made no further objection.

Time and place were appointed; but at the last moment Julian made a protest against the absurd defensive armour generally worn by German students in their duels.

"Why on earth should we pretend that we don't want to hurt each other?" he said viciously. "Why put on goggles and gloves? Come, Carrington, you and I may as well fight each other English fashion—or not at all."

Carrington, who was gradually recovering from his inebriety, gave a sort of inarticulate whimper,

that at present would be so satisfactory. However, we shall have the foils off."

"If Carrington would make an apology—"

"It is not a case for apologies," said Julian sternly.

"It is a case for punishment."

And Englefield saw that it was useless to say more.

The meeting-place was well known to the students, whose duels were frequent, and generally harmless enough. But on this occasion Englefield felt nervous about the result. Julian was quiet, but dangerous; and Carrington was sick and sullen. There was little delay. The meeting took place before sunlight had faded in the west; there was a clear yellow light diffused through the dusty windows of the big fencing saloon, where many of the students' duels were fought, and which formed an excellent setting for the scene that was to come. Scarsdale and Carrington both knew the place well, and Dr. Englefield almost smiled to himself as he recalled the quaint, half-comical scenes which he had witnessed in this very place, when two German students, armed *cap-à-pié*, had solemnly slashed at each other's faces for full thirty minutes, until one of them had managed to inflict a slight scratch upon the other's nose.

But there was not likely to be anything amusing in the present meeting. Julian was looking extremely grim, and Carrington had a fierce malice in his white face which was exceedingly suggestive of deadly results. Dr. Englefield felt an odd sensation of approaching danger; this was no combat for play or pretence, it was a matter of life or death.

The seconds, a little alarmed at the fierceness of the antagonists, made a last endeavour after peace.

"If Mr. Carrington apologised," one of them murmured to Dr. Englefield, "would not Mr. Scarsdale—"

"What rot it is to wear all these things!" he said loudly. "Why not strip them off and fight with no protection at all?"

These sayings of his were quoted afterwards to his detriment. It was said that he particularly decreed Carrington's death: that his hatred to his opponent was not normal, but absolutely virulent. The Count de Ruvigny was particularly struck by this fact, and ready to bear witness to it afterwards.

The duellists were placed in position, and the fencing began. For the first two bouts neither of them touched the other. At the third attempt, Carrington seemed to grow excited, and lunged out wildly at his opponent, but with no result. A third halt was called: the seconds ministered to the needs of the two fighters, and then left them to proceed.

There was a sudden shout. Julian's sword had touched Carrington's arm and torn it. Or was it the arm? There was a stain of blood on his sleeve—on his side: it could not easily be seen where the blow had struck. But the seconds leapt forward in an instant, and beat back the shining steel; and even as they did so, Noel Carrington's sword slipped from his grasp, and he himself fell forward upon his face.

A quiver ran through all his limbs, and then he lay quite still.

Dr. Englefield was beside him instantly. His face was very pale as he looked up from the cursory examination that he was able to make just then.

"I am very sorry to say, gentlemen, that Mr. Carrington is—dead."

"Dead! But I scarcely touched him!" Julian cried sharply.

"He is dead. And you, my dear fellow—you had better get away. Cross the frontier; lie low for a little while; we'll do our best to hush the matter up. Myself, I think it was not the wound, but heart



CHAPTER III

FRIENDSHIP

"BUT, Betty darling, it is perfectly impossible !
You can't do it !"

The speaker was a tall, handsome girl of twenty, whose name was Nora Lysaght. She was not only handsome, but strikingly individual in appearance : she looked as though she could judge for herself and stand alone, and yet there was nothing aggressive or masculine about her. Her features were finely but delicately cut ; her dark eyes were soft as well as brilliant, and the curves of her olive cheek and chin were delightful. But there was just the hint of undeniable energy and decision about her which gave her in many people's eyes an indescribable charm. Her stately neck, her slight but lissome figure, her lovely yet capable-looking hands, all added to the impression of power and determination which her personality produced. She was

dressed plainly, but with an expensive plainness which meant the perfection of cut and fabric which only a full purse can obtain; and her deep reddish brown coat and skirt suited her admirably. It was autumnal weather, and the cloth was exactly the shade of an autumnal leaf.

The girl to whom she spoke was in many respects an entire contrast to herself. She was not particularly small, but she gave the impression of smallness from her extreme slimness and air of fragility. Nora's figure was elastic and upright; that of her friend was so slight and delicate that it seemed almost ready to fall together when she

the youthful softness of her outlines and the pathetic shades above and below her beautiful eyes was at times almost too intense to be pleasant. Yet she was a pretty creature, and, with health and happiness, she might still develop into a beautiful woman. She was dressed in mourning of the most sombre kind ; her dress was half covered with crape, which, however, was turning a little brown ; and there was not the slightest hint of white at the throat or wrists. This depth of blackness would have been singularly unbecoming to most people ; but to Betty Carrington, with her white skin and sunshiny hair, it served to throw her best points into the strongest relief.

The two girls, who had been school friends in earlier days, had met in the drawing-room of a London house, which Nora and an old aunt of hers was tenanting for an indefinite period. The house belonged to Nora's cousin, Sir Philip Evelyn, but as he was a good deal more interested in his country estate than in London society, he allowed his relations to occupy the house at a merely nominal rent. When Nora was of age she would have a large income ; but, in the meantime, the amount allowed for her maintenance was not particularly large, nor was her aunt's income unlimited, so that

they were exceedingly glad to avail themselves of Philip's generosity. Philip was fond, in a cool, desultory way, of his cousin Nora, and liked her to enjoy herself and be comfortable; and Nora was quite capable of appreciating his good-will. She had a wonderful number of friends and acquaintances in London; and among them, a large proportion consisted of people whom she had in one way or another managed to befriend or assist; and her present victim seemed likely to rank among their number. For Nora's old school friend had announced her intention of seeking a situation; and Nora had indignantly declared that it was "perfectly

Nora was silent for a moment ; then she took a seat beside her friend on a sofa, and drew Betty's hand into hers.

"Of course, I'm awfully ignorant," she said, "but I don't altogether understand, dear, why you should need work of this kind. You know when you were at school with me, everyone said you belonged to very rich people—you don't mind my saying this, do you? I vaguely heard that you had lost money, but I did not think that it could all be gone!"

"But it is," said Betty curtly. "Every penny of it is gone. Oh, Nora, don't you know? I fancied everyone would know. Did you not hear of a great crash about two years ago, when it was discovered that the Rosalio Company was a fraudulent concern, and couldn't meet its liabilities."

"I remember the name of the company, but I did not know that you had anything to do with it."

"My father was absolutely ruined by the failure," said Betty, in a low voice. "There was a Mr. Scarsdale, chairman of the company, who had persuaded him, little by little, to invest his whole fortune, and it went as like a bubble—when disaster came. I don't understand these matters very well, but it seems to me an extraordinary thing that this

Mr. Scarsdale should not have been ruined, although hundreds of people lost their all in that collapse of the company ; but Mr. Scarsdale had retired—with his millions—just before the crash came."

"How absolutely scandalous!" exclaimed Nora.

"It seems terrible, does it not? I have been told that he was a very dishonest man. He died the other day, of brain disease, I believe."

"And what has become of his money?"

"I suppose it went to the son," said Betty, in a weary voice. "And the son—it was the son, Mr. Scarsdale's son, who killed my brother."

"My poor Betty! Killed him? What! your

must be hard to know what to do or say when someone flings it in your face that your father is a scoundrel."

"Yes, and of course Noel was perfectly justified," said Betty eagerly, "for everyone said that old Mr. Scarsdale was a sort of financial pirate and robber. And Noel was very hot-tempered, and so, I suppose, was the other young man, and they challenged each other—"

"In Germany. Ah! they had learnt the practice only too well," said Nora, with deep interest in her tone. "And they fought, did they, Betty?"

"Yes, they fought, and Noel—died—at the beginning of the third round, I believe."

"Oh, my dear, how terrible for you! This young Scarsdale—was he not arrested?"

"No; there was some technical justification. The doctor, a friend of Mr. Scarsdale's, swore that Noel died of heart disease, but of course we *knew* that he did nothing of the sort. When father heard the story, he was so overcome that there seemed nothing left for him but death. You must not judge him harshly, Nora—he took his own life. And I was left."

"You—left alone!"

Nora's voice was full of restrained indignation. It seemed to her the height of selfishness that a man should commit suicide in his despair, in order to escape the consequences of his own sins or indiscretion, and leave his only daughter, brought up in luxury, trained to the indulgence of every taste, to make her own way in the world ; but she dared not put her feelings into words, for she knew very well that Betty's love for her father and brother would not permit her to cast upon them a shadow of blame. After all, they were dead, and gone to their account : it was no business of Nora's to judge them, or to hurt

Nora indignantly. "Think of all the prizes you had at school."

"They were just for things that don't pay," said Betty, with a patient little smile. "Italian and china painting and the guitar—things that nobody particularly wants to learn, except from an expert, and I cannot call myself quite that, can I?"

"You used to play the guitar charmingly," said Nora, "and sing the sweetest songs to it. Anybody would like to learn how to do it as you did."

Betty shook her head.

"It is no use. I am not clever enough to set up as a professional teacher of the guitar, and I don't observe that mothers of children under ten are very much impressed by it. And once or twice when I have been persuaded into playing and singing after dinner, I have been told that I was forward and made myself unpleasantly prominent."

"How absurdly idiotic some people are!" sighed Nora. "Why, you would be an ideal companion for any girl—a girl like me, for instance, with only an old aunt to look after her and no sisters of her own. I only wish I had known what you were doing a year ago, because just now as it

happens"—and the colour rushed into her dark cheek—"I have some rather out-of-the-way plans, and I am thinking, perhaps, of going abroad; so that—"

"Dear Nora, if you were thinking of asking me to be your companion, I can only say that nothing would induce me to fill the post," said Betty, with a wonderfully bright smile lighting up her golden-brown eyes and pathetic little pale face. "I should know that you were doing it only for charity, and I should never consent."

"Don't be too sure of that," said Nora, laughing as if to cover some little embarrassment, "for if it

rate, I have made a new friend lately, and I must tell you all about him presently."

Betty looked up with a little air of surprise. "Him?" she said interrogatively.

"Oh, yes; it is not a woman," said Nora, flushing like a rose; "but girls can have men friends nowadays, can they not? There is nothing at all unusual about it. But, Betty dear, you have not finished telling me your story. I want to know what you have been doing for the last two years. I wondered why it was that you did not write to me when we left Brighton, and I never connected you with the many catastrophes caused by the failure of that mining company, although I think I must have seen your father's name in the list of shareholders."

"One does not read those things very attentively," said Betty. "It all happened just after I left school, and then a relation of my mother's asked me to come to her as companion. I was quite happy while I was with her, apart, of course, from the trouble of my family affairs; but in six months' time she died suddenly, and I had to look out for another situation."

"And you found one?"

"Yes; I became nursery governess to the children of a Mrs. Binks, whose husband was a grocer, I believe. They were very well off, and did not treat me badly; but there was an elder son who began to be — disagreeable and impertinent, and I thought I had better come away. That was three months ago."

"And you have found nothing to do since then?"

"Nothing at all," and for the first time Betty's voice quivered, as though with coming tears. "I made my money last as well as I could," she said; "but it costs a great deal to live, doesn't it, Nora? And one has to pay fees at registry

"Oh, yes," said Betty, wiping away a tear, and smiling a hard, bright smile. "Of course I have money."

"How much?" Nora asked.

"Really, Nora dear, I don't see that you need ask that question," said Betty, in a would-be offended tone. But Nora only pressed her questions closer.

"Have you such a thing as a pound in the world? No; I know you have not. Betty, you little humbug, speak the truth this moment, or I shall shake you. Have you half-a-crown, or—can you lend me a shilling, dear, in order to send out for some stamps?"

She had her arm round Betty's waist as she spoke, and Betty was obliged to laugh; but the laugh ended in a sob, and the fair head sank down on Nora's shoulder as Betty ruefully confessed that the sum of her worldly wealth amounted to exactly twopence halfpenny.

"You are the silliest little girl that ever lived," said Nora. "Fancy not coming to me before this! I have got you now, and here you will stay; do you understand? If you won't stay willingly, I shall keep you as a sort of prisoner,

and I shall not let you go away until I have seen you established in something definite and suitable, with proper payment attached to it."

"Oh, I knew you would be kind — too kind," said Betty, struggling with her sobs, which came, perhaps, from exhaustion more than anything else. "I knew you would want to be generous and charitable; but then, you see, I am not the sort of person to receive generosity in a proper spirit — I really would be a great deal rather earning my own living in a garret, and if you could help me to any independent work I should indeed be grateful."

"I promise to help you to independent work as

"If I can be of any use to you, I shan't mind so much," said Betty, with a sigh; "but indeed you must not think I have come to the end of my resources, for although I have so little money just now, I could have raised something on a little jewellery which I still keep, and that was what I intended to do to-day."

"The necessity is obviated," said Nora quickly. "If you stay with me in order to do my work, of course you will have a salary, and it is the most ordinary thing in the world to pay part of it in advance, so take these two five-pound notes and this gold at once—this very minute—and if it is not enough, say so, and then get your boxes and things from your lodgings, and settle yourself here with me this very afternoon."

"I hate taking it from you," said Betty; "but you will remember that it is only for a time."

CHAPTER IV

"A FRIEND IN NEED—"

NORA had tact enough not to offer her company to Betty in the expedition to the girl's lodgings. She guessed that there might be an irritated landlady to pacify, and articles of value to be taken out of pawn. The presence of a third person, even of an old school

"French!" exclaimed Betty, with an upward lift of her brows. "But I hope it is not a Frenchman, Nora; I should not like you to marry a Frenchman, and go away out of England for ever."

"I should not go out of England for ever," said Nora, with a happy laugh, "because if I married him he would come to live in England with me. You see, I shall have a house of my own and some sort of an estate when I am twenty-one, and it would not do to forsake my duties altogether."

"Then your French friend," said Betty, rather hesitatingly, "hasn't got any duties of his own—any estate, I mean—in his own country?"

She spoke with the innocence of a child, and she was surprised to see that Nora coloured hotly and bit her lip.

"I am sure you don't mean to reproach him for his poverty," she said, in a reproachful tone. "Yes, he is rather poor; but genuine, unaffected poverty is quite refreshing in these days."

"I never found it so," said Betty, rather wearily, and Nora's heart smote her for her own unkindness, as she looked at the girl's pale cheeks and tired eyelids.

"Don't let us discuss either poverty or riches," she

and she was very busy with a ball of white wool and a needle, with which she wove the wool into intricate shapes. She did not seem to have eyes for anything but her work, and Nora presided at the tea-table, and administered cups of tea to various lady callers. Betty felt half disappointed to see that Nora's especial "friend" had not yet appeared upon the scene. She was introduced to Mrs. Evelyn and to the visitors, and established in a comfortable chair with tea and cake, but the visitors did not find her very interesting, because, as a matter of fact, she was too tired and exhausted to be able to talk. One by one the callers ceased to make remarks to her and

nothing to Betty of her interest in the visitor that she expected, Betty would have been able to guess the true state of affairs from the radiance that flashed into Nora's face when at last the door was opened and a young man was shown into the room.

"The Marquis de Ruvigny"—where had Betty heard that name? It seemed to her vaguely familiar, and yet she did not recognise the countenance of Nora's visitor in the very least. He was a handsome man, who passed at first sight for six- or seven-and-twenty, though a close examination of his features would have convinced a dispassionate observer that quite ten years should be added to that age. His face was pale and sharply cut, and his smiling dark eyes were distinctly handsome; but Betty did not like the rather cruel lines of his thin lips, which were plainly to be seen beneath the long, waxed moustache with curled-up ends, which stamped him unmistakably "No Englishman." He was slenderly built, and seemed tall until he stood beside Nora, and then it could be seen that he wanted quite an inch even of her height; but he held himself so well and with such a military

swagger that his lack of stature was not often commented upon.

Betty fancied that when he was introduced to her she saw a flash of recognition in his face as her name was pronounced.

She looked up at him inquiringly: it seemed to her that he wished to make—or to wait for—some sign of recognition on her part. But she could not recollect any occasion on which she had seen those pale, perfect features, the brilliant agate eyes, the curled moustache above the venomous lips; and it seemed to her that if she had ever seen those traits before, she would have remembered them.

greatest share. He was describing to her, with great vivacity, an expedition which he had once made up the River Orinoco; and he described the conditions of his journey and the charm of the scenery so graphically that even Betty was moved to some little interest in the tale. But Nora's whole soul seemed to be given to the narrative—and the narrator. Her dark eyes were suffused, her cheeks slightly flushed, and on her lips there hovered the faint, happy smile of the woman who loves and thinks herself beloved. Betty noted that smile with a touch of wonder and a touch of fear.

It was late before the Count took his departure, and Nora's eyes strayed rather pleadingly once or twice to Mrs. Evelyn's placid face. But Mrs. Evelyn, although not perhaps very hard to please, had been slightly vexed by the Count de Ruvigny's persistent tendency to ignore her; and she revenged herself by taking no notice of Nora's desire, which she well understood, that she should ask the Count to dinner. Therefore, after waiting a little longer than politeness demanded, the young man took his leave, and Nora's face fell visibly.

"I thought you would have asked M. de Ruvigny to dinner, Aunt Mary," she said frankly, yet with a

touch of wistfulness in her tone, when the Count had left the room.

"I know you did, dear. But M. de Ruvigny's long stories don't interest me particularly, and I like to eat my dinner in peace."

"But they interest other people. I am sure Betty would have liked to hear more about the Orinoco."

"Is Miss Carrington interested in South America?"

"I am very fond of hearing about other people's adventures," said Betty, with a smile.

"So am I and I long to travel," said Nora.

She sighed a little as she went upstairs. "It's a pity people ever grow old, isn't it?—old in their muscles, old in their heart. Aunt Mary used to be quite an energetic woman and a great walker, I believe; and now she seems chained to her chair."

"I think I sympathise with the desire for rest," said Betty softly.

"That is only because you are over-tired, you poor little darling! When you are rested, it would be great fun to go and see the world, wouldn't it? Oh, how I long sometimes to get away."

"To get away from England, Nora?"

"Yes, wouldn't you like it? I am so tired of conventions, and strict, stupid rules and the proprieties. I think it must be because I am a Ward in Chancery that I feel so very much inclined to break loose from the chains of social tyranny that bind us all."

"It would be rather uncomfortable, I think," said Betty simply, and Nora divined that at that moment she would not find a sympathetic listener, for Betty was only too glad to resume the social fetters which her friend contemned. Miss Lysaght made haste to change the subject.

"This is your room, Betty. I hope you will like

it. Mine is just opposite. I hope you will be happy and comfortable here."

The room which they entered together was certainly charming; a symphony in blue and white which was distinctly becoming to Betty's fair complexion. Nora looked at her and laughed triumphantly.

"I knew I was right. My aunt thought the yellow room would suit you. I said that it was impossible; you must have some shade of blue. Yellow is for brunettes like me; not for 'a golden blonde.'"

"You are too kind to me, Nora. I hope Mrs. Evelyn does not mind my coming."

"It looks perfect to me; but then it is so long since I saw a really nice, pleasant house."

"Never mind, you will see plenty of nice houses now: I am not going to let you go back into lodgings. Now I will leave you to dress—but don't worry about dressing unless you like. Your black dress looks quite nice as it is."

Betty smiled, but flushed a little.

"I have an evening dress or two left," she said, "though I am afraid they are rather old-fashioned. And I suppose it is nearly time to begin dressing, is it not?"

"Would you like Lisette to come and help you?"

"Oh no, thank you. I can do everything for myself now. Do you remember when I came to Madame Laval's at Brighton, and was so helpless and stupid? I had never done anything for myself, and if you had not been kind to me I should never have learnt how to be independent."

"Well, you are very independent now," said Nora, "to make up for it. I must fly, or I shall not be ready for dinner. I do wish Aunt Mary had asked M. de Ruigny. Don't you think he is very interesting, Betty?"

"Tolerably," said Betty.

"I thought you would be sure to appreciate him. He is so eloquent, so cultured and refined—"

"Yes," said Betty hesitatingly ; " but do you think he is *good* ? "

" *Good* ! "

"Yes, good ; it seems to me that he has rather a bad face. And his mouth is cruel."

The colour flew into Nora's cheeks.

"You might be fair to him, at least, Betty. Of course, you have been prejudiced."

"How can I be prejudiced ? I know nothing about him—except what you have told me."

"Haven't you seen his name in the papers ? "

"Has he contradicted the reports, then?"

"Oh yes—to me."

"But not to the papers?"

"No; he looks down on them too much. He will not let his mind be disturbed by anything they say. It is too paltry."

"I think he is mistaken," said Betty. "It is always best to keep a fair name and fame before men."

"It is not necessary. His friends know him for what he is."

"Nora—forgive me for asking—are you engaged to him?"

"Not formally. But we understand each other. You see, there are formalities connected with my being engaged or married, Betty. Until I am of age I cannot be either, without the consent of my guardian and of the Court. So we think it better not to say anything about it at present."

"Because your guardian would be sure to disapprove?"

"Not *sure* to disapprove; but I don't want him to run the gamut of their criticism just yet. Oh, Betty, I thought you would be more sympathetic. I'm afraid you don't like him."

"I did not say that. I have not seen enough of him to decide. But, Nora, I shall be certainly late for dinner if I do not get my things out of my box—not that I have anything nice to wear. You must excuse me to-night, and I will furbish up something better for to-morrow."

"You will look nice in whatever you wear," said Nora hurriedly. "I will come for you when I am ready; don't mind the gong."

She went to her own room to don the simplest frock that she could find; but her mind ran upon other things besides frocks. She was a little hurt at the things Betty had been saying to her. It

CHAPTER V

BETTY'S EYES

MRS. EVELYN, although a sleepy old lady, seemed to take a good deal of interest in Betty Carrington. She seemed to know something of the tragedy which had wrecked the Carrington family, and she mentioned once that she had met Scarsdale, the man whom his admirers pronounced a financial genius, whilst others named him only as a successful swindler who had managed to ruin hundreds of people, yet to escape the arm of the law, and to amass a prodigious fortune for himself and his son. Nora tried to suppress these references, thinking that any mention of the Scarsdales must be intensely painful to Betty; but the girl looked up with a sudden flush of interest in her pale face, and something like a vindictive gleam in her eyes.

"But he did not escape," she said; "he died

of heart failure, brought on by excitement, three or four months afterwards."

"Really? Then he did not have a long time in which to enjoy his ill-gotten gains," said Mrs. Evelyn.

They had come out from the dining-room and were sitting in low, comfortable chairs round the wood fire in the drawing-room, for the evenings were chilly, and Mrs. Evelyn liked a cheerful place. She waved a large black fan to and fro, and sighed a little as she spoke.

"I suppose it is very wicked to pity a criminal,"

well of him, although he was more or less a self-made man, and had a good deal of the roughness and abruptness of speech of the ordinary Cumberland yeoman. But his wife was a sweet woman, and a thorough lady, and we all thought it a great misfortune when she died a year or two after her marriage. I cannot help thinking that if she had lived Mr. Scarsdale might have been a better man. They said he was very fond of her, and of the child that she left."

"That child," said Betty, speaking slowly, "grew up to be the man who took my brother's life."

"My dear! Surely not?" said Mrs. Evelyn, in mild dismay. "I never heard of that before. I am afraid I should not have mentioned the Scarsdales; but I really did not know of these sad circumstances."

"It does not matter, really," said Betty, without flinching. "I do not mind hearing of the Scarsdales; but I sometimes think that I hate the younger Mr. Scarsdale more than his father, for of course one knows that business men have great temptations; but a man must have been brutal indeed to force a quarrel on my brother at the very moment when he had heard of my father's ruin."

There was not so much bitterness in her tone as

a touch of stern condemnation, at which Nora wondered ; it seemed to her so unlike Betty's gentle nature to judge so harshly ; but of course, Nora reflected, Betty must have accurate information of what had gone on between the two young men, and what had led to the quarrel : probably, as she said, young Scarsdale had been a bully, and had brutally forced a duel upon Carrington at a moment when he was overpowered by excitement and dismay. Taking this view for granted, Nora at once warmly espoused Betty Carrington's case.

"And I suppose this wretched young man," she said, "has got all the money that his father

"He could only give back some money; he could not bring back the dead."

"But if he had given back the money, as he was in justice bound to do," said Nora, "you and hundreds of others need not have suffered."

"I think I would rather suffer," said Betty, "than take money from his hands."

There was a little silence, for neither Nora nor Mrs. Evelyn knew exactly how to respond, and in the silence they heard the sound of a hansom driving up to the door, then of a knock and ring, and the entrance apparently of a visitor.

"Who can be coming here at this time of night?" said Mrs. Evelyn, sitting up and listening.

"It may be Philip," said Nora, rising and going towards the door. "I am nearly sure I heard his voice."

She was right, for even while she spoke the door opened, and the butler announced Sir Philip Evelyn.

A tall man with deepest grey eyes, and a keenly intellectual face, redeemed from aggressiveness by a humorous twist of the mouth and a very kindly glance, advanced into the room with outstretched hands, and after bestowing both of them for a moment on Nora, proceeded to bend over his aunt's chair and

imprint a kiss on her fair forehead. The little old lady looked up at him with a smiling glance.

"My dear Phil," she said, "I cannot say how glad I am to see you. I hope your room is ready for you. If we had but known that you were coming—"

"There is always a room ready, auntie," said Nora's voice, interposing. "The yellow room is quite at liberty."

Betty remembered what had been said concerning the respective merits of the yellow room and the blue, and secretly hoped that she had not turned Sir Philip out of his favourite apartment. But it certainly did not seem as if he had a preference for any one

she uttered this word of explanation because the girl looked so fearfully forlorn and shabby in the plain black dress which looked, somehow, like a morning dress adapted to evening wear.

It was a black voile, and had once been graceful and pretty; but it was brown with age and sadly in need of repair, for the material had worn very thin in places, and the hem was frayed. She wondered whether Philip would notice these defects, for he was a man who was considered to have a rather fastidious taste in dress.

As a matter of fact, Sir Philip did not see her dress at all. What struck him was the milk-white tone of her neck and arms against the dead black of the voile and the golden lights in the waves of her fawn-coloured hair. For some time he did not see her eyes, for she kept them fixed on the floor, and he became quite vexed at last that she would not raise her eyelids. With that kind of hair it was probable that her eyes would be grey-blue, and he grew quite impatient because she would not let him see their colour. But all the time he kept an impassive face, and scarcely seemed to look at her, but continued to talk in his usual cheerful and kindly fashion to his aunt

and cousin. He was not at all in the habit of reflecting curiously on the colour of women's eyes, and he was surprised, afterwards, when he remembered how much interest he had taken in the question. But there was something so unusual in the complexion of that golden-brown hair and milk-white complexion, together with the delicately dark outline of her eyebrows, that his curiosity might be deemed æsthetic only, and proceeding simply from desire to appreciate a scheme of colour.

He managed at last to address a remark to her, and then at last she looked at him as she replied.

matters with his relations. But such was not the case. When she was gone Philip talked nothing but commonplaces, and indeed he had not come to London in order to confer with his aunt or his cousin, but simply to buy some agricultural implements, in which his relations did not take the slightest interest, although he drew a diagram of one or two of them in order to explain their nature to his aunt. Finally, pocketing his notebook with the rather amateurish designs, he remarked, in a casual tone, that he did not think he had seen Miss Carrington before.

"No, indeed, I quite lost sight of her after we left school," said Nora, and forthwith she told him the whole story, and was glad to see that Philip was interested in her friend.

"Poor girl, it was a very hard fate for her," he said gravely, when she concluded her tale. "Well, between us I should think we might manage to help her. I suppose you have asked her to stay here?"

"Yes, for an unlimited visit. I suppose you don't mind? It is your house, after all, though I sometimes forget the fact. And I have put her into your room, by-the-by."

"All the better," said Sir Philip, "for I know it is a fairly comfortable one, and there are plenty of other rooms. If you want a friend and companion, she would, perhaps, consent to stay on."

"I hope she will," said Nora, "although she seems rather to dislike the idea. She has a strange little vein of independence, and seems to think she would prefer a situation. She suspects me of inventing one for her, and she does not like the idea."

Nora's eyes twinkled a little as she spoke.

"You must try to delude her into the belief

the Vicarage. Mrs. Neve is always changing her governesses, and if she thinks that your friend wants a situation she will do her best to get her away from Oakstead."

"She shall not go there if I can prevent it," said Nora. "I know that woman and her children. As for her governesses—she simply grinds their bones to make her bread."

"My dear Nora, what a horrible expression!" said Mrs. Evelyn.

"But it is true," said Nora. "She does not mind how hard she works them so long as she gets what she wants for herself and the children. Poor Miss Wingfield—you remember her, surely?—she went home with a sprained back, because of carrying the children about. And Miss Cairns never had time to recover from influenza, and another girl was laid up with nervous exhaustion. She keeps them continually on the go."

"She is a very active woman," said Mrs. Evelyn mildly, and Sir Philip gave a short laugh, as if the description in some way amused him.

"She is like a squirrel in a cage. She is eternally pursuing something without knowing what."

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"Nora, Nora," said Mrs. Evelyn reprovingly, "you are too critical, my dear."

"Oh, it is not that I dislike the woman," said Nora, "and I am sure she tries to do her duty; but she is evidently trying to solve the problem of perpetual motion in her own person, and naturally her governesses cannot live up to it. I certainly won't let Betty go near the Neves."

"There are plenty of posts that she might get," said Sir Philip, evidently beginning to take interest in the matter, "besides that of a governess. She looks far too frail to have anything to do with unruly children."

"She is very white, isn't she? But I think she has

"How can there be two versions?" said Nora, almost indignantly. "If this young Scarsdale man killed Betty's brother, what version can make things out differently?"

"It was a duel," said Sir Philip, "and a duel in Germany is not usually a very serious affair. Possibly there was an accident of some sort. It is even quite possible that the duel may have been with another man."


"Really, Philip, I do not see why you need be so sceptical. Surely Betty would know the truth?"

"Oh, I suppose Miss Carrington would know," said Evelyn hastily. "I was only taking the doctrine of possibilities into account. The fact is, I met young Scarsdale once upon a time, and he seemed to me a very pleasant sort of young fellow."

"How curious!" exclaimed Nora. "You and Aunt Mary have both met the Scarsdales. Aunt Mary knew the father, and you knew the son. It is quite a coincidence!"

Sir Philip looked at his aunt with a laughing eye.

"Not so much a coincidence as it seems," he remarked. "Aunt Mary knew that I was going to the town in which young Scarsdale was living, and asked me to look him up."



Mrs. Evelyn turned a little pinker than usual, and murmured some disconnected sentences in reply.

"I told you I knew his mother, Nora—such a dear girl—and a great mistake to marry a man below you in position. I heard that her little boy was such a darling baby."

"But he isn't a baby now," interposed Nora, still with some indignation. "I suppose he is a man of five- or six-and-twenty, if not more, is he not, Philip?"

"I should think he must be so by this time," said Sir Philip indifferently. "But there was nothing

and resentment in her heart, for to my mind there is nothing so pitiable as the desire of revenge."

"You must be on a pinnacle to say that," jeered Nora, whose liberty of speech Sir Philip never seemed to resent. "Surely it might happen that you wanted to punish a person who had behaved badly, and would you call that revenge? I sometimes feel," she went on, with a gleam in her dark eyes, "that I should *like* to make a man suffer if he had brought misery into a woman's life as both these Scarsdales have done."

"In real life," said Sir Philip, "I trust that you would not be quite so vindictive. I am sure your little friend is not. Vengeance is not in our hands."

"If I were Betty," said Nora, "I think I should not leave Heaven alone until its vengeance had descended on the Scarsdale man. I should batter the door with my prayers."

"And now, my dear Nora," said Mrs Evelyn, "you are not only vulgar, but profane."

CHAPTER VI

OAKSTEAD

OAKSTEAD MANOR was the name of Sir Philip Evelyn's favourite place of residence ; and Betty Carrington approved of his taste. She herself was passionately fond of a country life, and shrank from the gaieties of London ; while Nora, on the other hand, liked experience of every kind, loved town in

the hand that threw her out of the nest. Her only desire was to be still and unnoticed ; if she could escape remark she felt that she would be perfectly happy. It was not the lack of wealth that troubled her, but the lack of relations, of a fixed place in which to live and die. She was not of a wandering spirit ; she desired more than anything the reposefulness of a settled home. Sometimes, in looking round Oakstead Manor, she sighed to herself at the thought of all that it represented : the quietness, the refinement, the best kind of culture ; and she thought wistfully, though without envy, of Nora's happy lot, in that nothing could deprive her of some shelter of this kind for her head. Not that Oakstead was Nora's home, but it was the home to which she was accustomed ; and Sir Philip had told her that it would always be "home" to her. Nora was the owner of two houses, both of which were at present let to retired manufacturers at a very high rental ; but when she came of age it had been decided that she should then make a choice of "a domicile" ; and whether she would turn out one of the manufacturers and live in her own house, or whether she would continue to make Oakstead her home, was as yet an open question.

Oakstead Manor was a beautiful example of the old-fashioned red-brick mansion, with picturesque chimneys, and oriel windows draped with creepers of various sorts. There was a charming walled garden, and a park which Sir Philip was trying to stock not only with ordinary deer, but with animals of the wilder tribes, though not of the wilder natures. He had already acclimatised some antelopes and kangeroos, and Mrs. Evelyn never went across the park at twilight without suffering agonies of fright from the sight of strange leaping figures which she could not be convinced were harmless to human beings.

Nora and Mrs. Evelyn had brought Betty down

ashamed of himself. Just for the pleasure of feasting his eyes on that pure, sweet face, and of seeing the long eyelashes lift, and show the golden-brown of those wonderful eyes, was it worth while to disturb the beautiful maidenly serenity which had evidently never known the wild heart-throbs of love? Most certainly not!

For he was not impelled to marry her: he was not inclined to regard her as a marriageable person at all—at least, as far as he was concerned. He was a great deal too old for her, for one thing. If he had been a little younger matters might have been different; for certainly he was very much attracted by her uncommon style of beauty (this was the way in which he put it to himself); but at thirty-seven it would be folly to choose a girl of nineteen as one's wife. Indeed, he had a slightly uncomfortable feeling that if anyone were chosen for him from prudential motives it would be his Cousin Nora; for, no doubt, it would be a good thing to merge the two estates into one, and to consolidate the family income. But he was quite certain that Nora did not care for him except in a very sisterly way; and he had a brotherly liking for her which did not seem to be on its way to a

warmer development. No, he could not ask Nora to be his wife ; and as for her younger friend, Betty Carrington, it was quite out of the question to ask *her*. He was eighteen years older than Betty, nearly twice her age. He had a habit at the time of idly dotting down the numbers in the leaves of his blotting-book in the manner : " $19 + 18 = 37$," or " $37 - 19 = 18$," which would have been decidedly puzzling if he had died suddenly and strangers had come in to examine his papers and regulate his affairs.

Betty was quite unconscious of these harmless calculations. She did not think about Sir Philip's

brother, Noel, in that way. She told Nora a good deal about this brother of hers, but she carefully concealed his faults. She spoke of him as a Bayard, a Galahad, a Don Quixote all in one. His attack upon young Scarsdale was in order to punish him for some insulting word about his father. "He would willingly have died," said Betty, "in defence of his father's honour." And although Nora's practical good sense urged her to think that Noel would have been more useful to the family if he had not risked his life in defence of Mr. Carrington's reputation, she was sufficiently carried away by Betty's enthusiasm to make her exceedingly hot against the young man who, as she was informed, had struck the fatal blow. Scarsdale must be a monster, so much was clear; and Noel Carrington had been a manly, ingenious, spirited young fellow, who had wiped out an insult in blood. It was this picture of Noel Carrington which lingered in Nora's memory, and made her hard upon the Scarsdales, father and son.

The two girls became closer friends than ever during their sojourn at Oakstead. Nora insisted upon remodelling Betty's wardrobe, and through the skilful offices of Miss Lysaght's maid, Betty

was soon able to rejoice, although in a shame-faced manner, in some very becoming frocks. For she still had many remnants of her old expensive clothing which she had not been able to turn to account ; but the maid's clever fingers made the old skirts and bodices look like new. And here and there Nora interpolated a bit of lace, a bow of ribbon, or a flounce, which made all the difference in the effect of the renovated dress, and which was yet not so valuable that Betty could object to the gift.

"Well, my dear," Nora said to her one day ;
"you must be clothed, especially if you are going

not like being dressed up in other people's things—even in yours, dear Nora; although I mind yours less than anyone else's. But in my place, you would feel as I do, I am sure of it."

"I should crush my feelings for the sake of my friends, then," said Nora. "Think what a disappointment you will inflict upon me, if you do not help me to get rid of that tiresome frock. What do you expect me to do with it? I can't give it to Norris, nor even to Mrs. Neve—although, I daresay, she might make children's frocks out of it."

"Do let her make them then, do, Nora! Little Ethel would look sweet in a China silk frock."

"Indeed, I shall do nothing of the kind. It was much too expensive a frock to be cut up for children; and it has only been worn once. If I sent it to an old clothes shop, I suppose I should get five shillings for it. Don't you see how silly it is to refuse to help me?"

So, in the end, the white frock changed hands, and it became Betty mightily, and turned her from a heavy-eyed mourner into a sylph.

Christmas Day made a capital occasion for gifts. Nora carefully instructed Sir Philip what he was

to give, and was not much surprised when he supplemented the muff-chain which she decided on, with a charming gold curb bracelet. Mrs. Evelyn was "inspired" with the desire to give her a painted fan; and Nora herself bestowed upon her a dozen costly trifles, all by way of replacing the treasures which had been hers in her father's time. It was well known that Miss Carrington had relinquished all her possessions of any value—her jewels, her pictures, the contents of her silver-table—for the benefit of her father's creditors; and she was, therefore, absolutely without any of the pretty trinkets and ornaments which are beloved

for a nursery governess to wear a lovely gold chain studded with uncut sapphires."

"Those chains are very cheap," said Nora.

"And these chinchilla pins are quite unsuitable."

"Indeed," Nora said, purposely misunderstanding her. "I should think they were just the things to wear at Christmas-time. They are always so soft and warm."

"I shall be scolded for dressing above my station," said Betty gravely. "I know the sort of things people say. 'Nobody will like you or respect you any better for wearing things that you cannot afford, Miss Carrington; and I must beg that you will put those ornaments away, and never let me see you with your neck and arms exposed again.'"

"You don't mean to say that people talk in that way to their governesses?"

"Indeed I do."

"I wonder if that is what Mrs. Neve says to them," said Nora, forgetting that she had been warned not to let Betty know of Mrs. Neve's celerity in changing her governesses. But she had allowed this remark to slip out, and Betty pricked up her ears at once.

"Mrs. Neve—you mean the vicar's wife?"

"Yes; but she has someone now, so don't worry yourself about her."

"A Miss Middleton," said Betty ruminatingly. "A tall girl with red eyes. I wonder if she cries a good deal. I think I heard that she was going to leave."

"I've not heard so," said Nora hastily. "Don't trouble yourself about Mrs. Neve; she is never satisfied."

But Betty did not forget that the Vicar and his wife had seven children, and would certainly need a new governess if Miss Middleton were going to

fainted after decorating the church at Christmas-time, and was in the habit of catching bad colds in the chest.

"I told her," said Mrs. Neve virtuously, "that she was very wrong in writing to me that she was a capable and active person; for she was both feeble and indolent. Would you believe it? she burst out crying, and said she had better go at once, so I gave her a month's warning, and she will leave on the last day of January. And I shall have all the trouble of looking out for somebody again."

"I think I know of a governess who might suit you," said Betty, in a small voice, "if you would tell me your requirements."

"Oh, my requirements are not at all large," said Mrs. Neve. "I want a strong, active young woman, who will keep order in the schoolroom, take the children out for long walks, and teach them reading and writing and arithmetic. I don't want accomplishments. A little music, so that she she can listen to the children's practising—that is quite enough. And, of course, I should expect her to do a little needlework and make herself useful in the parish in her spare time."

"Of course," said Betty mechanically.

"She must be a Churchwoman," the Vicar's wife continued, "but neither too High nor too Low. A regular Communicant, of course. If she knew a little Latin and French, it might be useful for the elder children; but it is not necessary. Do you know of any likely person, Miss Carrington?"

"I was thinking of myself," said Betty, with a faint smile. "I want a situation by-and-by."

"*You!* But—I thought you were one of Miss Lysaght's friends," said Mrs. Neve, putting down the tea-pot hurriedly, and staring at Betty as if she had gone out of her senses. "*You* cannot mean to

"No, I am only a visitor there," said Betty. "But I want to earn something for myself."

"I must think over it," said Mrs. Neve coldly. "I must ask the Vicar what he thinks. You do not—to me—look strong enough to undertake the position."

"I am much stronger than I look," said Betty.

Then she rose to go, feeling painfully aware that the interview was ended.

"I will write to you," said the Vicar's wife, "and tell you what Mr. Neve thinks of the matter. Good afternoon."

She turned her back and did not shake hands; but Betty bore her no malice. The poor woman was evidently quite humiliated by the mistake that she had made. She had thought Betty Carrington a young lady of wealth and position, with whom Nora Lysaght had been at school. She was indignant to find that she had been only a governess all the time. "And we asked her to dinner!" she murmured to herself indignantly. "It was just like that audacious Nora Lysaght to play me such a trick."

But a conversation with her husband convinced her that it would be paying a compliment to the Evelyns to take Betty as her governess; the Evelyns would

surely feel themselves indebted to her for taking a penniless girl off their hands. She wrote coldly to Betty that if her references were good enough, she was at liberty to undertake the post in February.

Betty hesitated a little, and thought of confiding in Nora before actually promising Mrs Neve. But for a day or two confidences were impossible. Nora had received letters which made her suddenly anxious to go to London, and to London, therefore, she went, without even the companionship of a maid. And Betty, therefore, wrote to Mrs. Neve and accepted the offered situation.

CHAPTER VII

NORA'S INTENTIONS

NORA'S expedition to London seemed to have done her good. She came back refreshed and invigorated, with a fine glow upon her cheeks, which proved her complete health of body and ease of mind. She looked radiant with life and happiness. Betty, who met her in the hall, was astonished at the change in her appearance, and wondered what could have happened to produce this astonishing improvement in her mood. But the cause of it was quite clear to her when once she and Nora were together, and there could be unreserved confidence between them.

"You have had a successful day I see," said Betty, with a half envious smile.

"Oh, such a day!" said Nora, stretching her arms above her dark head, and looking as if she were ready to bound into the air and fly away out

sheer joy of living and gaiety of heart. "I did some shopping, I went to a picture gallery, and to a matinée. Then I had tea with friends, and dinner at a restaurant, after which I came down here, and to be back at ten o'clock after doing so much, is, I think, a triumph."

"Aren't you very tired?"

"Not in the least. I could do it all over again, if necessary. I do like a thorough-going busy day like this one. I enjoy it from the very bottom of my heart."

Betty shook her head.

"You like the excitement of it," she said reproach-


picture she had seen of the eleven thousand virgins of Cologne."

"Madame would have been equal to all of them, I have no doubt of that," said Nora. "Well, I will allow that it is rather nice to be back again, and to sit by this lovely fire and talk. I am going to have a cup of Bovril and a biscuit, and I should advise you to have one too, for it is a bitterly cold night—freezing, I hear. Take that comfortable chair and draw it right up to the fire, and then I will tell you what I really did do in town, for at present I have only given you a very outside view of my expedition."

"I am most anxious to hear," said Betty; but she did not hear for some minutes.

The maid arrived with refreshments on a tray, and then Nora insisted upon getting into her dressing-gown before she began to talk, and advised Betty to do the same. After which change of raiment the maid was sent to bed, and the two girls settled down luxuriously in Nora's room to make the most of their leisure.

"I wonder where I am to begin," premised Nora. "Now, you must not look too grave, Betty; you must be a little gay and pleasant, or I shall never have the courage to tell you all the extraordinary



things to which I have committed myself. First of all, let me tell you who the people were with whom I had tea."

"The Ambers," said Betty quickly, making a guess.

Nora looked surprised.

"How quick you are, Betty," she said. "I never thought you would guess. Why did you think I should go to the Ambers?"

"I can't tell," said Betty, flushing. "I only noticed that you were really very intimate with them, much more intimate than Mrs. Evelyn knew, and that she does not like them; so I thought

"Only that they want me to go with them."

"You, Nora? Oh, but surely you would not think of doing such a thing as that?"

"I should enjoy myself tremendously," said Nora. "You know I am very fond of Mrs. Amber, and there is absolutely no reason why I should not travel with her."

"No; I suppose there is not," said Betty, looking absently into the fire.

"What objection do you think there is?" said Nora, trying not to speak too quickly.

"Only that Mrs. Evelyn does not like her, and Mrs. Evelyn is one of your guardians, is she not?"

"No; she is not a guardian: she is my chaperon. My proper guardian is the Lord Chancellor, you know. I am a Ward in Chancery. I suppose I shall have to have an interview with him before I settle to go; but I do not mind that a bit. He may look as grim as he likes, but I am sure he will do what I ask."

"Perhaps he won't approve of the Ambers," said Betty doubtfully.

"Well, now, Betty, what can anyone have to say against them? They are a little eccentric, but they are very kind-hearted; and I am quite sure

that Millicent would look after me as if I were her own child. Everybody knows that Professor Amber is a very distinguished man. He wants to go and collect butterflies in South America, but his wife does not mean to accompany him so far. We are to land him at some out-of-the-way place on the coast, and then sail away north to healthier shores. She wants to visit the West Indian Islands, and so do I; and after that we should go to New York, where, I believe, Professor Amber would join us a little later. Isn't it a delightful trip to think of?"

Betty looked hard at her friend. Nora's colour

you that he has got a post in Martinique, and if we paid that island a visit no doubt we should see him."

Betty was silent for a little while; then she asked in a subdued tone:

"And shall you tell Sir Philip and Mrs. Evelyn that he will be there?"

"I don't see that I need," said Nora. She thrust out one pointed toe to the fire, and looked at her slipper attentively. "It does not matter to them. Philip knows nothing about the Count de Ruvigny, and although I am sorry my aunt doesn't like him, you don't suppose that I shall let her opinion influence my conduct?"

"Don't you think you are a little headstrong, Nora?" said her friend.

"No, I don't," said Nora, with open eyes and slightly lifted chin. "I shall be twenty-one in a very short time, and then, you know, I shall be able to do exactly as I please. But in the meantime I am disobeying and deceiving nobody by going on this cruise, and if the Count happens to be at the other end of it, that is surely his affair and not mine."

"Should you go if he were not at Martinique?" asked Betty.

"Oh, that is a question which cannot possibly be answered," said Nora. "I always hate to be asked what I should do if circumstances were quite different from what they are. We have to judge of persons and circumstances as we find them. Betty, you are very disagreeable. I thought you would be pleased to know that I had the chance of such a delightful expedition; for you know it is not everyone whom the Ambers would ask."

"It seems a curious coincidence," said Betty

Professor Amber was desirous of making a cruise among the islands of the Caribbean Sea ; he had suggested to Nora that she might find out the details of their plan, and propose herself as a fellow-traveller !

"And when did he suggest all this?" Betty asked, in an uncompromising tone.

"To-day, of course," said Nora, and then coloured hotly, for she had not quite meant to tell Betty that she had seen the Count in town.

"To-day? Only to-day? And you talk of it as if you had been thinking it over for weeks!"

"Oh, well," said Nora, rather confused, "I had some vague idea of that sort in the autumn ; because he spoke of the post that he thought might be offered to him, and I said at the time how delightful it would be if we could go for a cruise and visit him on our way. But you need not look so reproachful, Betty, as if I had been planning everything from the beginning. Indeed, I saw him quite by accident to-day. He was in the picture gallery, and spoke to me there ; and one of the Miss Grevilles was with us all the time. There was nothing at all underhand about it."

She spoke in an aggrieved tone.

"I am glad to hear that, at any rate," said Betty, with a touch of causticity in her tone, "because it seemed to me as if you were becoming rather Machiavelian in craft—"

"Betty, how unkind you are!"

"And that you meant to amuse yourself by taking in everybody who belonged to you. If you have any more ulterior designs, Nora, I think you had better not tell me about them, for I assure you I don't want to hear."

"But I haven't any ulterior designs," said Nora impatiently. "You are much too suspicious, Betty. I assure you that I have no plots and plans in my

tears. She was thoroughly hurt and offended, and Betty felt a thrill of remorse.

"I did not mean to vex you, Nora, indeed, I didn't; and I am sure you would not do anything in an underhand manner; but I had a fancy that, perhaps, the Count did not understand English laws and English ways, and that he might have ideas in his mind which you did not suspect."

"I consider the Count to be one of the noblest of men," said Nora, still with offended dignity, "and I am sure he would never ask me to do anything that I ought not to do."

"Of course it is all right, then," said Betty, in a tone of relief.

"Besides," said Nora, still in a lofty tone, "he knows very well it would be a dangerous matter to marry me while I am still a Ward in Chancery. I was told of a man who was sent to prison for a year because he married a Chancery Ward without the Chancellor's consent."

"But perhaps he doesn't know all the English laws on the subject."

"Oh, he must know," said Nora, looking rather scared, nevertheless. "Besides, he would never think of such a thing, and if he did, why should I consent?"

I don't want to be done out of a pretty wedding, and I want you to be one of my bridesmaids. I certainly couldn't have you as a bridesmaid, Betty, if I were married at Martinique."

"Has Monsieur de Ruvigny gone yet?" asked Betty abruptly.

"No ; he goes next week."

"Shall you see him again?"

"I am not sure. He said something about coming down here for a day or two. Of course, as Philip doesn't know him, he would stay at the village inn, unless I persuaded Philip to invite him to the house."

Then Betty spoke seriously, and with a very

know what you are talking about. Philip is a delightful man, no doubt, but he is English to the very core, and you know what a mass of prejudices exists in the heart of a true-born Englishman. He would condemn Monsieur de Ruvigny simply because he was a foreigner. He would not let me say a word on his behalf. I shall certainly not tell Philip anything about the matter until I am obliged, for I know he would oppose my engagement and my marriage tooth and nail."

"And isn't he a good judge of the sort of man you ought to marry?" said Betty.

"No, indeed. I mean to choose for myself. Besides, what difference would it make if I told him? He is not one of my legal guardians. I don't have to ask his consent when I marry; in fact, I don't suppose I shall ask anybody's consent, for I intend to marry the Count as soon as possible after I am twenty-one."

"Not without consultation with your friends?"

A confident smile curled Nora's lips.

"I shall tell them about it, of course; but I am not sure that I shall consult them. That is to say, I shall not ask for their opinion, though I daresay they will give it me unasked. I am sure Aunt Mary will. Why

should I lay myself open to suspicion and argument and foolish pleading? The man that I love is the man that I mean to marry, and I don't mean anybody to interfere between Gerard and myself, and therefore I am not going to provoke endless discussions."

"I don't think you are right," said Betty, with a little sigh. "I think it would be much wiser to let everybody know what you contemplate doing, and I don't at all like your meeting Monsieur de Ruvigny out in the West Indian Islands without anyone to advise you or to take care of you. I suppose, however, that you would take Mrs. Amber into your confidence?"

happy, Nora. Happiness seems your appointed gift in life. As for me: do you know what I have made up my mind to do? I shall go and be governess to Mrs. Neve's children at the Vicarage. I feel sure it is quite the most sensible thing to be done."

"I will never forgive you if you do," protested Nora. But Betty was inexorable. She had already promised Mrs. Neve, she said, and she was to take up her duties at the Vicarage soon after the beginning of the new year.

CHAPTER VIII

NORA'S PREPARATIONS

SIR PHILIP went about his occupations at this time with a distinctly aggrieved look upon his face. He considered that the two girls in whom he took an interest were treating him badly. To begin with, Nora's plan for going abroad with the Ambers did not please him, although he could not urge any very


very pleasant trip, and their cruise would be taken in a well-known pleasure steamer which made a point of organising trips to the most celebrated spots in the world. At first Philip Evelyn grumbled even at this arrangement.

"Why should you want to go with a mob of strangers?" he said to Nora. "Besides, they won't undertake to convey the Professor to South America."

"Oh, I know that," said Nora, readily enough. "We land the Professor at a spot where he can get a boat south. Then we go on through the islands and come home either with the other passengers or by way of New York, where we should wait for the Professor."

"A wild goose scheme. I can see no advantage in it," said Sir Philip.

"Now, don't go and put difficulties in my way," said Nora coaxingly. "We have always been such good friends, haven't we, Philip? And I shall never forgive you if you interfere with me just now. I must be left alone for once in a way, to follow my own devices; for I feel a sort of conviction that if people oppose me, and tie me down, I shall do something desperate."



She laughed as she spoke; but Philip, looking at her, realised not for the first time that there was a wild and adventurous streak in Nora's nature, inherited, probably, from some far-away ancestor who had once, perhaps, loved fighting and adventure, new scenes and new countries, as Nora did to-day. It was worse than useless to fight against such a temperament. Better to let her have her fling, and see the world as she chose, for in a few months she would be perfectly independent of any authority, and could fit out an expedition to the North Pole, or start on an exploration of Thibet, for all that anybody could say to the contrary.

chaperon, and all the while she would be feeling frightfully ill and wishing herself back at Oakstead or your house in town. Really, Philip, it would be sheer cruelty to drag her half over the world at my tail."

"Then why don't you take Miss Carrington with you?" said Philip. "You could offer her the trip if she would go as your—companion, I suppose you would call it; and you need not tell her that I would find the expenses. Then you would not be so entirely dependent upon the Ambers for company."

"I wish I had thought of that earlier," said Nora musingly. "It is very kind of you, Phil, and I am extremely grateful to you; but I do not think anything will induce Betty to give up her little plan of going to the Vicarage as governess."

"I expressly warned you," said Philip, in a tone of annoyance, "not to let her get inveigled into anything of the sort. Mrs. Neve will kill her."

"Oh, no," said Nora cheerfully, "not so bad as that. She will work her rather hard, of course; but Betty can hold her own when she chooses, and I have given her a good talking to on the

question of Mrs. Neve's exactions, and I daresay you won't mind if Aunt Mary asks her over here sometimes, for her afternoons, because it would be a most delightful change for her to spend a few hours at Oakstead Park in exchange for the Vicarage nursery."

"It is too ridiculous," said Philip, rather fiercely, "that a delicate woman like Miss Carrington—delicate, beautiful and refined—should have to spend her life amongst such uncongenial surroundings! If we had only known that she was in such a hurry to get work, we could have found something suitable for her, and not allowed her to

better adopt Betty outright, and provide for her. If you gave her a dowry, she would have a very good chance of getting married, I should think."

"Don't be absurd, Nora!" said Sir Philip; and there was so much irritation in his voice that Nora did not venture to say anything more, for she knew that there was a point beyond which it was not pleasant to go with her cousin.

Possibly, she thought, she had made a mistake in using the word "adopt," for it seemed to imply that Sir Philip had more than attained middle-age.

"After all," Nora said to herself, "he is not quite old enough to be her father, so perhaps he is a little wee bit offended," and she laughed a little at the idea of Philip's sensitiveness on the subject of his age.

There was no difficulty in securing the consent which Nora desired for her expedition to the West Indian Islands. Cruises of this description were, at that time, rather popular, and Nora made the most of a very slight attack of influenza from which she had suffered in December, leaving it to be understood that she felt the necessity of a change for her health's sake. She did not expect to be away very long;

at any rate, the steamer in which she was going to start would be back in five weeks. If she stayed longer, it would be because she had gone with the Ambers to New York. Sir Philip discreetly advised her to leave this point open to further decision, for he had a shrewd impression that it was quite possible for Nora and Mrs. Amber to get tired of each other on board ship, in which case it was not likely that Nora would wish to go to America. Nora laughed at his fears, but saw the wisdom of adapting herself to them. She really had plenty of good sense, and she knew that Millicent Amber was a person of erratic

was a dear, and wanted her bad penny home again as soon as possible. Aunt Mary did not understand jokes, and therefore received this remark in a somewhat lugubrious silence, and hoped audibly that no harm would come of it. It was another grievance of hers that Miss Carrington had accepted Mrs. Neve's proposal that she should be governess to her children. Mrs. Evelyn protested quite plaintively.

"You know, dear," she said to Betty, "you could have stayed here perfectly well with me. I don't know what to do without a companion, for although dear Nora is so fond of her own way, and so anxious for a little excitement, she is a dear, generous-hearted girl, and never minds what she does for me, so that when I am left alone I shall miss her very much."

"Perhaps," said Betty, "you have some other young relation whom you could ask to stay with you."

Mrs. Evelyn shook her head.

"Unfortunately," she said, "my nephew, Sir Philip, is very difficult to please."

"Really?" said Betty, almost incredulously.

"Yes, my dear. You, of course, have quite

found favour in his eyes; but the ordinary, frivolous society girl is a thing that he cannot tolerate, and although I have some young cousins living in Wales, I should not like to ask them here at all, for I do not think they would please my nephew, and then, you know, things would be uncomfortable."

"Oh, but Sir Philip would never make anyone uncomfortable, I am sure," said Betty hastily.

Mrs. Evelyn coughed deprecatingly.

"Possibly not intentionally. But he has lived alone a good deal, and he has not the knack of concealing his feelings, and if he felt bored or

just a little about farming. Sir Philip says that I know just enough to be conscious of my ignorance," she added, laughing, "and he has lent me this little book to read. It is on 'Chemical Manures.'"

"My dear, how can you feel interested in such horrid subjects?"

"I am very much interested indeed," said Betty brightly, "and I am glad I shall be here for some little time, so that he may tell me how his experiments progress, though, of course, I am afraid I shall not have much chance of seeing him when I am at the Vicarage."

"Philip goes to the Vicarage sometimes," said Mrs. Evelyn. "I daresay you will see him there, now and then. But I am rather sorry, my dear, that you are going to teach the children, because Mrs. Neve is a person who has such peculiar ideas that I think you will have to be very careful what you say and do. For myself, when Nora was younger, and we had a governess for her, I always took it for granted that they were ladies—in fact, I never chose one who was not—and I treated them as I should wish to be treated myself. But Mrs. Neve has been unfortunate in her selection, and has got into a way of behaving to them as

they were her inferiors. It is only a manner, and very likely it will wear off as she gets to know you better. But I think you had better be warned of it, or it may take you by surprise."

"Oh, I know," said Betty meekly, "for I was there one day before Miss Milroy left, and she had scolded her until the poor girl nearly cried her eyes out. But you see, dear Mrs. Evelyn, I should not be at all likely to cry my eyes out because Mrs. Neve was rude to me. I should only think that she did not know any better." And there was a gentle dignity in Betty's manner which convinced Mrs. Evelyn that Nora had not been wrong when she

enough to meet the Count de Ruvigny in a really accidental way ; but on her part, at least, it must be accidental, or she would have felt ashamed of herself. Betty did not acquit the Count of some scheming when she found that he had made acquaintance with Mrs. Amber, and "happened to call" more than once when Nora was visiting her friends. After all, there was no harm in that," said Betty to herself ; but she always had a sensation of discomfort when she looked at the Count, and never could believe that his dark eyes had a perfectly straightforward look. Possibly her manner expressed this feeling a little, for on the last occasion when Nora and de Ruvigny met, the Count said to her, as they talked together in a little alcove at one end of Mrs. Amber's drawing-room :

"I do not think your friend is a friend of mine, my dearest."

"Hush, don't call me that. Somebody might hear. Do you think that Betty doesn't like you ?"

"That is my impression. Do you not observe the glare with which she favours me, now and then ?"

"I am sure Miss Carrington could not glare," said Nora, who had sense enough to be slightly annoyed

at the man's tone. "She is quite too sweet and gentle to make herself disagreeable to anyone."

"Carrington, did you say her name was?" the Count asked, twisting up the ends of his moustache. "I knew someone of that name, once."

"I don't think she has any relations living," said Nora.

"Ah, it was a young fellow that I knew—in Germany."

"It must have been her brother," said Nora hastily, with a face full of interest. "Oh, when you have time you must tell me something about him. He was killed in a duel, was he not?"

"Oh, well, it was impossible to do that," said de Ruvigny carelessly. "He was too much incensed; the provocation was too great. Besides, I do not suppose the other man—Scarsdale—would have let it drop."

"That Mr. Scarsdale must have been a horrible man," said Nora, almost passionately. "He might have been content with the knowledge that his father had ruined the Carringtons; but he need not have fastened a quarrel on the son. Noel Carrington's death left Betty alone in the world."

"Very sad," said the Count conventionally; "but of course we must remember that there are things which cannot be overlooked by a man of honour."

"You are in favour of duelling?" said Nora.

The Count slightly shrugged his shoulders.

"It is still, to some extent, the custom," he said lightly, "and personally I should much prefer it to a law-suit. And you must remember that, as a rule, duels do not end tragically."

"Yes, but there is always the danger, and in the duel we are speaking of the ending was very tragic."

"It was, indeed," said the Count; but there was a certain want of sympathy in his tone, and Nora would have turned from him impatiently if he had

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been any other man. As it was, she remembered that he was not English, and that he was soon to be borne away from her across the Atlantic to the West Indian Isles, and for this reason she stifled the protest of her reason, and allowed him to make love to her for the rest of the afternoon.

CHAPTER IX

ON BOARD

THE day came at last when Nora was to go on board the ss. *Argolis*. It was to start from Tilbury Docks, and a little party escorted her thither, for neither Sir Philip nor Mrs. Evelyn nor, of course, Betty, would dream of her being allowed to start without seeing for themselves the accommodation provided by the steamer, and the sort of people with whom she was to travel. They reached the boat about three o'clock in the afternoon: it was advertised to start at four; and Sir Philip, who was an old traveller, advised Nora to be in plenty of time, so that she could unpack her belongings and make herself comfortable before the vessel got under way, or at least crept down the smooth channel of the river to the open sea.

"By the look of the sky," he said, "I believe it is coming on to blow, so you had better prepare yourself for a tossing."

"I shall enjoy it above all things," said Nora, with a laugh.

"Oh, Nora, dear, how can you?" said Mrs. Evelyn, who was almost crying at the prospect of parting with her niece. "It seems like tempting Providence to say that you will enjoy a storm."

"Oh, there won't be a storm, Aunt Mary," said Sir Philip, good-humouredly: "only what sailors call a cap-full of wind—just enough to make the boat dance up and down upon the waves a little."

"You have the Channel and the Bay before you," he said to Nora, in a tone of mocking warning, "so I should advise you to be well prepared."

would want that evening, and then they returned to the saloon and persuaded Mrs. Evelyn to come on deck, where there was much more to be seen, and they were not in the way of hurrying passengers or porters with hand luggage. Even Mrs. Evelyn condescended to be pleased with the colour and movement of the scene, for although the docks and the shipping might make a gloomy enough picture in themselves, their effect was counteracted by an unusually bright blue sky, flecked with flying clouds overhead, and by the sight of smart-looking ship's officers, gay bunting and a stream of fresh arrivals, amongst whom there was scarcely a mournful face to be found. For the passengers of the *Argolis* were, with scarcely any exception, "on pleasure bent," and were not disturbed by the cares of business or even by any undue anxiety as to health, for the pleasure-cruise on which they were embarking was more for the sake of the strong and vigorous than for the invalid, and it would be conducted in too leisurely a manner to afford any advantage to the man of business.

"Rather a mixed crowd," said Mrs. Evelyn, in a shocked tone, as the passengers came on board, cheery and smiling, certainly, but rather unlike the

prim and proper people with whom Mrs. Evelyn was chiefly acquainted.

Sir Philip, however, laughed and reassured her. "People never look their best when they are just starting on a long voyage," he said. "I daresay these girls in rain-coats and sailor hats will all be very smart by the time the boat gets to Lisbon. I have been in that direction myself, and I know the transformation that takes place as soon as warmer weather comes along."

"I hope you will find some pleasant people among them, Nora," said Mrs. Evelyn, rather apprehensively. "Have you a list of the passengers?"

woman, and would have been prettier if she had acquired the art of neatness in her appearance. As she had come from London and been exposed to a rather high wind, it seemed even to Nora as if all her attire were in tatters; not that there was anything absolutely torn, but that the gauze scarf round her neck, the ermine boa, the tails of her coat and the trimmings of her skirt, to say nothing of her dishevelled fringe, were flying in different ways, and looked as if they might at any moment part company with their owner. Nora gallantly flew to meet her, and attempted to restrain some of the fly-away ends; but Mrs. Amber at once assured her that her efforts would be fruitless.

"It is just this wind, my dear child. One can't keep one's clothes together when such a breeze is blowing. We shall have a nice time in the Channel, I expect."

Then she saw Mrs. Evelyn and pounced upon her.

"Oh, dear, dear Mrs. Evelyn, how sweet of you to come to see us off! Why don't you come with us? It would be just the thing to do you good."

"I am not fond of the sea, thank you," said Mrs. Evelyn, rather drily.

"Aren't you really? I love it, although I am

always ill. Nora tells me she was never sea-sick in her life. She is the girl for a cruise, isn't she? Here's the Professor—I always call him the Professor, you know, because it impresses casual people, though I don't think, as a rule, one should give a title of any sort to one's husband. Who is this with you," she said in a loud whisper, as she caught sight of Betty Carrington. "Not Sir Philip's wife, is it? I didn't know he was married yet."

Sir Philip was annoyed and turned on his heel, while Betty's face assumed the hue of a fine carnation.

"No, no," said Nora hurriedly. "It is a friend of mine who is staying with my aunt for the

Mrs. Evelyn looked annoyed; but Sir Philip turned back to Nora and laughed.

"To be shut up with Mrs. Amber within the limits of one boat for six weeks, Nora," he said, "would transcend even the limits of my endurance!"

"You are unkind," said Nora, rather indignantly. "Everyone acknowledges that Mrs. Amber is a most charming woman. She was only a little excited and breathless this afternoon."

Then a bell began to ring.

"Ah," said Sir Philip, "that is the first signal for us to leave the boat. I suppose we shall have to be off in a few minutes."

"We had better be going, then," said Aunt Mary, with some nervousness. "I don't want to be carried off by mistake."

"I suppose all the passengers are on board, now," said Nora, looking round.

Betty noticed the glance and felt a momentary curiosity. She spoke to Nora in an undertone.

"You didn't expect to see anyone you knew, I suppose?"

"Oh, no," said Nora, still absently looking towards the confused crowds of people coming

and going. "The Count—if you are thinking of him—sailed a fortnight ago. I was only thinking—just between ourselves, Betty—that Aunt Mary was right, and they were rather an odd-looking set of people. But I suppose one can't judge at the outset."

"Everyone is in such a hurry," said Betty, "and laden with packages. One can't feel at all sure what they would look like in ordinary life."

"Well, I suppose I shall soon see," Nora answered, laughing. "There, that is the only good-looking man I have seen yet!"

Betty followed her eyes.

When I find out who he is I must let you know."

The man in question would certainly have been called handsome without hesitation by the ordinary run of observers. Nora was, perhaps, a little prejudiced in favour of men built on rather small and elegant lines, while Betty had a preference for kind, intellectual features, for a long nose and a brown beard. The man whom they failed to admire was certainly built on a somewhat colossal scale. Tall, stalwart, and broad-shouldered, he looked a very son of Anak amongst the hoards of smaller and slighter men. His olive skin and dark hair and eyes were almost those of a Spaniard, and he had the extreme gravity and dignity which seems sometimes to characterise the elder races of the world. But as far as dress was concerned he was unmistakably English, and when he spoke, Nora caught the accent of an educated man. She thought that he looked about thirty years of age, but she discovered afterwards that he was not so much by four or five years. The expression that Betty had noticed seemed to her to be one of profound melancholy, and there was something almost stern in the set of his lips,

and the slight occasional lowering of his brows. She determined to ask his name, and to find out something about him as soon as she could possibly do so, for he was almost the first person on board in whose appearance she had felt able to take the slightest interest. The stewardess informed her later on that the gentleman was entered in the list as "Mr. J. Dale;" but that information did not help her very much. However, for the moment she forgot all about him, for the last farewells had to be said, as the passengers' friends were being warned to make haste to the shore. Mrs. Evelyn burst into tears as she said

"Do keep an eye upon Betty," she said, "and see that she doesn't get terribly overworked. I have told Aunt Mary to keep me informed; but you know what Aunt Mary is—as kind as possible, but without the slightest discrimination. Now please be on the watch, and if you see any signs of her being overworked or distressed in any way, do put your foot down, and either make Mrs. Neve behave properly, or persuade Betty to come away."

"I think Miss Carrington will be rather difficult to persuade," said Sir Philip slowly.

"Yes, she is an obstinate little person," Nora answered, "and I don't believe anything would induce her to do what she did not consider right. At the same time she is open to a little gentle persuasion, sometimes, from people whom she thoroughly likes, and she does like you."

She could not imagine why Philip gave her such an unusually warm pressure of the hand, nor why he kissed her forehead—a rare ceremony with him—with such unwonted fervour. It did not occur to her until long afterwards that he was pleased to hear of Betty Carrington's liking for him. And then she felt only inclined to laugh at his vanity. Of course,

he was far too old, as she had said before, to take any serious interest in Betty Carrington.

She watched her friends until they were out of sight, and then, turning away from the bulwarks with a curious little sigh, she addressed herself to the business in hand, such as the settlement of her deck chair in a convenient place, the decision as to her seat at dinner, and the other odds and ends of business which fill up the first moments of one's life at sea. Then, seeing the Professor had come on deck, she knocked at the door of her friend's cabin, and asked whether she could be of any assistance to her.

"I do want to get my things arranged before dinner. Have you found out where we are to sit?"

"Yes, in rather a nice place—one of the smaller tables near a window. The steward says that we shall be on the shady side for the greater part of the voyage, and that is a great advantage in visiting the tropics."

"I wonder who is at the same table," speculated Mrs. Amber. "It is always more of a risk at a small table than a large one. You are so dependent on your company. Did you happen to notice the names of any person near us? I suppose you have been to look at the table?"

"Yes, I looked," said Nora, and her face dimpled with fun as she continued. "There is a Canon Somebody and his wife, and there is Mr. Kettle, the celebrated nonconformist preacher. There are three Americans, and two or three men whom I know nothing about; but the name of the one seated next me seems to be Dale."

"I shall sit next to Mr. Kettle," said Mrs. Amber in a firm voice. "I am quite sure he will be more amusing than the Canon. I hope he will tell us some of his adventures in street preaching. I have often thought that I should like a full description."

"From what we read of him in the papers," said Nora, "I should think he will be only too happy to oblige you. He might even give you a specimen in the saloon."

But Mrs. Amber demurred at this idea.

CHAPTER X

GOOD-BYE

MRS. EVELYN did not feel equal to going back to Oakstead that night. She travelled up to London and announced her determination to stay the night at Sir Philip's house in town, where she had told the servants to be in readiness. Betty was to stay with her, and she told Sir Philip that they could do quite well without him, and that he might return to Oakstead that night if he pleased. But Philip Evelyn, with a little touch of annoyance in his manner, declared that he had no intention of leaving them alone, but that he would dine and sleep at his club, and only look in upon them during their leisure hours. So it happened that just as Mrs. Evelyn and her young friend were concluding a somewhat melancholy dinner, Sir Philip came in smiling, and announced that he had taken a box at a theatre, and that they must go with him to see a new play which

had been very much written and talked about. Mrs. Evelyn would gladly have made excuses for herself, and gone to bed ; but she could never hold out against Philip's persuasions, and besides, there was the box to be considered, not to speak of Betty's suddenly illuminated face. The girl acknowledged, in answer to a question, that she had not been to a theatre since she was a school-girl, and the roses in her cheeks showed such pleasure in the prospect, that Mrs. Evelyn could not bear to disappoint her. As for the question of dress, Mrs. Evelyn's beautiful lace and furs were quite sufficient adornment, and behind the curtains of the box it did not very much matter

work hard for a pittance, and to be treated as a machine; made to grind out a certain amount of daily work, but of no importance otherwise. He wished that it was in his power to adopt her as Nora had suggested. What a good time he would give her if she had been his own child. But a curious loathing and disgust suddenly filled him at the thought of it. No, he could not be a father to Betty Carrington; he did not even want to claim the rank of a brother or a friend. Something closer, something dearer he would have liked to be, and even while he felt that to make Betty his wife would give him the only happiness that life contained, he felt at the same time that it was folly for him to think such thoughts, and that it would be mere madness to propose such an alliance to Betty. It would be taking an unfair advantage of her to propose such a thing, for, of course, in her lonely and poverty-stricken condition, the prospect of being mistress of Oakstead Park might have its attractions, and for the sake of the house and the wealth that went with it she might be willing to put up with a middle-aged man for her husband, even although she did not greatly care for him. And Philip Evelyn was the last man to strike a bargain of that kind. He wanted the best of

everything, and he would not endure to be merely tolerated by his wife. If she did not love him he would do without her, and he was quite convinced that it was impossible to obtain Betty Carrington's love.

Still, that did not prevent him from enjoying himself that evening. It was delightful to see Betty's absorption in the play, and in the intervals to note how many glasses were turned towards the box, where a heavy curtain only partially screened from the sight of the audience the vision of a girl's golden head, and the charm of her winsome face. Philip never knew very much about the play after-

tired or depressed. Sir Philip was obliged to leave them at the door of his own house and go back to his club with an unsatisfied feeling that he would have liked to promise her a great deal more enjoyment. But there was very little more that he could do for her just then. She had promised to begin her work at the Vicarage on the following day, and he could not think of anything that would tempt Betty to break her word.

"It was lovely—lovely," sighed Betty to herself, as she paused in her undressing to look at herself in the glass, and wonder why her eyes were like stars, and her cheeks glowed like the roses. "It was just like a fairy-tale; but naturally one can't expect fairy-tales to last. All the fairy-tales end to-morrow, that's quite certain, and every-day life begins. I ought to be very thankful that I have got some work to do, and am not driven into hopeless poverty as I was when I came to Nora. It is very ungrateful of me to feel so depressed to-night at the thought of my work. A few weeks ago I should have welcomed it with pleasure. Well, I shall always have this night to remember. I shall have 'had my day,' as Tennyson says, and I suppose there are a great many people in the world who

have never had even one whole day of complete happiness."

Thus she tried to calm down her excitement of feeling; but after the delights of the evening it was difficult for her to sleep, and she tossed about until morning, sleep refusing to visit her too wide-open eyes.

It was partly in consequence of this sleeplessness, no doubt, that she presented a somewhat weary and woebegone aspect when she arrived at the Vicarage on the following day. She was expected to tea, and she walked from Oakstead Park in the afternoon, leaving her luggage to be sent after her. She said

heart sinking a little. It was rather selfish of him, she thought, not to say good-bye. It surely could not be painful to him to say farewell to one whom he had known for such a little time? But perhaps he was one of the people who dislike gratitude, and knew that she could not say good-bye without showing it.

"You must tell him, please," she faltered, "that I was very sorry to leave Oakstead, and that I thank him very much for all his kindness to me."

"He won't let me tell him that, my dear," said Mrs. Evelyn good-humouredly; "but you will see him again, I daresay, very soon, for he is often at the Vicarage."

"Ah, yes," said Betty, with a little smile; "but I don't suppose I shall be able to speak to him, so you must please try to give him my message."

"Well, I hope Mrs. Neve will be kind," said Mrs. Evelyn, rather disjointedly. Of course there was a connection in her own mind between this remark and the last one; but Betty did not for the moment see what it was. "If she treats you like a piece of furniture instead of a human being you have only to come up here, child, and stay with us. We shall be very pleased to have you."

"Thank you very much, dear Mrs. Evelyn. I

daresay I shall be quite comfortable with Mrs. Neve."

"I doubt it. I have never heard of anybody being particularly comfortable with her," said Mrs. Evelyn rather vindictively. "But you know, dear, you *would* make the arrangement for yourself, instead of consulting your friends, and you will allow me to say that that was very unwise of you. Young people should always consult their elders before they engage in important undertakings."

"I know it would have been better if I had spoken before promising Mrs. Neve that I would go; but you have no idea how I longed to be independent."

and took a friendly farewell of two or three of the servants who had been particularly kind to her, and shook hands with the dogs who wanted to accompany her through the Park, and then felt a little forlorn as she found herself walking down the long avenue without the consolation of anybody's presence, or the sound of a friendly voice in her ear to bid her be of good courage as she entered on her new career. But scarcely was she out of sight of the window when she heard a step on one of the well-gravelled walks which crossed the avenue here and there at right angles, and almost before she had realised that it was Sir Philip who was advancing towards her she found him at her side, uttering apologies for not having had the carriage ordered to convey her to the Vicarage, and for not being at home to say good-bye. *

"But you never told me when you were going," he said, looking down at her kindly. "I didn't think you were leaving us until after tea."

"Mrs. Neve expressed a wish that I should be there by five, as she wanted me to superintend the schoolroom tea."

"Schoolroom tea, indeed!" said Sir Philip, jerking his head impatiently. "Surely she might have let

you have one evening to yourself before beginning your duties?"

"Oh, no," said Betty, with a soft little smile. "That was not at all to be expected. Wherever I have been I have always begun my work as soon as I entered the house."

"I can't think why you took the situation!" said Sir Philip, in an exasperated tone. "You would have been doing a great kindness to my aunt if you had stayed with her."

Betty's eyes filled involuntarily with tears.

"I didn't know that she really wanted me," she said. "in fact I was afraid that it was only kindness

could only wish it were likely to be more congenial."

"I am fond of children," said Betty, "and I hope to make these children fond of me."

"I believe they are little brutes," said Sir Philip sincerely, "and I only hope that you will be able to keep them in order. If you are not, just send for me. I shall know how to make them behave themselves."

"And what would Mrs. Neve say to that?" inquired Betty, smiling.

"Oh, she would not object very much to anything I did. She has a certain respect for me as Lord of the Manor," said Sir Philip, with a laugh. "Now be sure you understand that we—that is, my aunt, and Nora, when she is at home, and I, myself—are all on your side, and ready to defend you against any unkindness or illwill, so that if you at any time find yourself in a difficulty, you must apply to one of us—do you understand?"

"I understand that you are very kind," said Betty, promptly, "and certainly if I were in any great difficulty I would ask you to help me; but I don't suppose that I shall need any help—at least, I hope not."

"Well, at any rate you would ask for help if you wanted it. I have your promise to that effect?"

"Yes, I promise," said Betty, in a low tone. And then Sir Philip held out his hand. The high road was in sight, and he did not mean to go further than the lodge.

"Good-bye, then," he said very gently. "I shall see you at church on Sunday, and at other times, I hope, during the week. And will you tell Mrs. Neve from me that you have my permission to bring the children into the Park if they want to play or walk there, only they must not throw stones at the animals; that is the only condition I make."

the festive aspect which it had worn when she had come by invitation to a Vicarage tea-party. The windows looked dark in the gathering twilight, and she had to wait some minutes before the door was opened by a maid servant with a decidedly frosty air. She was ushered into a dimly-lighted hall, into which Mrs. Neve presently issued from the drawing-room door, which she closed carefully after her.

"Oh, good afternoon, Miss Carrington. I am glad you are punctual. Mary will show you to your room where you can take off your things, and then would you kindly go into the schoolroom and give the children their tea. They will tell you what they are accustomed to in the evenings, and I will come up myself, by-and-by, if I have time."

"Yes, thank you," said Betty very gently. Mrs. Neve looked at her as though she had never been accustomed to thanks.

"And kindly try to keep the children in good order, Miss Carrington. The schoolroom is at the top of the house; but we can very often hear the noise they make up there. I look to you to keep them as quiet as possible."

"I will try," said Betty pleasantly. And then she was conducted upstairs by the frosty maid, and Mrs.

Neve returned to the drawing-room, where she was drinking tea with an intimate friend of her own.

"I always distrust these very mild-mannered, soft-spoken people," she explained to her visitor. "I never believe that they are sincere. Oh, I don't think this Miss Carrington will answer, but of course I have taken her to oblige the Evelyns, upon whom she was quite a burden. I suppose I shall have, at any rate, to keep her for three months or so."

"I should think you will have had quite enough of her in that time," said the sympathetic friend.

CHAPTER XI

THE FIRST DAY

BETTY followed the frosty servant to the top of the house in perfect silence. It was not until they stood on the landing that the woman spoke.

"There's your bedroom door, miss ; and there's the schoolroom, side by side. I suppose you have some luggage coming?"

"Yes, it is coming from Oakstead Park," said Betty, wondering why the maid did not open the door or offer to do anything for her.

"Oh, that's all right. Jane will see to it when she comes home. It's her afternoon out. I've nothing to do with the schoolroom."

"Shall I open the door, then?" said Betty. "Are there any matches or candles in the room, do you think?"

Something in her gentle voice seemed to strike

the woman as strange; she stared at her for a moment, and then went forward, striking a match, and lighted a gas-jet.

"I've seen you with Miss Lysaght, haven't I, miss?"

"Yes, I have been staying with her."

"You'll find it rather a change to come here, then. The children are fearfully wild, and none of the governesses had any control over them. But then, they weren't ladies, so what could you expect?"

Betty, feeling shocked by the woman's manner,

to the world's end if she'd let me. And I must apologise for speaking so free, but I didn't understand at first—"

"It's all right," said Betty quickly. "We shall understand each other better by-and-by. What are you? Parlour-maid?"

"House parlour-maid. And, so far, I've never troubled myself about the schoolroom; but as long as you're here, ma'am, I shall be pleased to do anything I can for you, seeing as how you was a friend of Miss Nora's."

"Thank you," said Betty courteously. "But you must not talk against the other ladies who were here before me, you know."

"I won't, ma'am. Can I get you some hot water or anything?"

"No, thank you, I am quite ready to go into the schoolroom now. Will you open the door for me, and announce me?"

"Certainly, ma'am."

And Clara, the frosty house parlour-maid, opened the door wide for the new governess, and said, "Miss Carrington," with as much distinction of manner as if she had been ushering a duchess into the drawing-room. Then she went out very

quickly and shut the door behind her, for she knew that she had created a sensation. There was a dead silence in the schoolroom, and seven pairs of eyes were solemnly fixed upon Betty Carrington's face. She knew most of the children by sight, but this solemn stare made her feel rather embarrassed.

The eldest girl, Gwendolen, who was a lanky creature of fifteen, spoke first.

"Who told Clara to bring you upstairs, I wonder?"

"Your mother told her to show me the way. I think you know who I am."

addressing herself to a younger boy, who was bending assiduously over an enormous book spread out upon the table. "What can it be?"

"It's Shakespeare," said the boy sharply. "I'm making a list of all his profane oaths and vulgar expressions."

"What an extraordinary thing to do!" said Betty, somewhat taken aback.

"And he uses them when he is angry," the elder girl went on calmly. "You'll be astonished at the names he calls you by-and-by."

"I am glad you have explained," said Miss Carrington. "May I sit down? I suppose it is time for tea."

"Oh, we've had tea," said the big boy, whom his sisters addressed as Ted.

And Betty noticed that there was not a vestige of food on the table, and that all the cups and plates had been used.

"Yes, we've finished," said Gwendolen, and stared at Betty.

"I thought you had tea at five?"

"So we do, generally. But as you were coming at five, we thought we had rather have it by ourselves. You'll have to go to the drawing-room for tea."

This remark seemed to be made as a joke, for all the children tittered and stared, as if anxious to know how Miss Carrington would take the idea. Apparently Miss Carrington took it coolly.

"I should think you are right," she said. "I had better go down to the drawing-room and explain. You see, I am thirsty, and I want a cup of tea."

She rose as she spoke, and moved towards the door, rather amused at the consternation which she now perceived that she was creating. The younger children had ceased to titter and sat or stood with

moment later, the door opened to admit the immaculate Clara, who held in her hands a dainty tray containing a tea-pot and other necessities of the afternoon meal, together with a plate of rolled slices of bread and butter, and some small cakes. From the sibilant exclamations which greeted her appearance, Betty gathered that it was entirely unexpected and inexplicable.

"Clara, you've no business to get out the best china for our governess," said Gwendolen, with an air. "Why, even *we* aren't allowed to use it. I'm sure mamma doesn't know."

"I always get out this china for Miss Lysaght's friends, miss," said Clara, imperturbably.

"I daresay—in the dining-room; that's a very different thing from bringing it up here."

"I shall not hurt the china," said Betty, facing the girl with perfect calm, "but if you think it is not to be used, Clara will perhaps give me a cup from the table. I can rinse it out and pour some tea into it, and the pretty china can go downstairs again."

"Never you mind what Miss Gwen says, ma'am," said Clara. "She talks a deal of nonsense. And you, Miss Gladys and Miss Violet, get back

to your game, if you please. Them sweet cakes is not for you."

Gladys and Violet were twins, and Betty could have laughed as she saw the two solemn faces, almost identical, line by line, and feature by feature, staring at her as she began to drink her tea, and then staring hard at the cakes upon her plate.

"I don't want the cakes, really," she said. "I am sure I may give you one each."

"Drawing-room cakes!" said Gwendolen triumphantly. "Won't mamma be furious?"

"Won't you take one, ma'am?" said Clara, still

after a time she burst out with impatient imperious questions.

"How did you get Clara over to your side? I never knew her bring a tray up for the governesses before. Did you give her money, so that she might favour you?"

"Certainly not," said Betty. Then with a smile: "I haven't very much money to give."

"How much have you?" said Harold, the Shakespeare student, with a suspicious glance at her.

"I don't quite remember. I suppose you know that that is not generally considered a very polite question."

"Oh, we don't set up for being polite here," said Ted.

"So I should suppose," said Betty, in an amused way.

"Well, I declare!" exclaimed Gwendolen. "One would think we were savages! We know how to be polite enough when we choose."

The smile that Betty gave her was full of meaning. Gwendolen choked in sudden wrath, and Ted, throwing down a book, laughed to himself.

"I say, you're not bad fun!" he cried, to Betty.

indignation. "And you're pretty too. Whatever made you do such a rotten thing as go out to be a governess?"

"I can't think," said Betty.

"Want of money, I suppose," said Gwendolen sulkily.

"That is one of the usual reasons why people take situations," said Betty.

Suddenly she started and uttered a little inarticulate cry. She felt a twinge in her ankle, as though a sharp point had been pressed into it. Ted bent down and felt under the sofa on which she had been seated, dragging forth a boy of about

with a lively glow, and she divined at once that Billy had spoken truth.

"Never mind," she said to Ted; and the boy looked guiltier than ever.

Gwendolen lifted her hand and gave Billy a sound box on the ear.

"You must never do that, Gwendolen," said Betty seriously. "Children are made deaf sometimes by boxes on the ear."

"I don't hurt him. I shall do it when he deserves it," said Gwendolen.

"Not when I am in the room," said Miss Carrington, with dignity.

"And how will you prevent it, I should like to know?"

"I don't quite know myself," Betty answered calmly. "But the first thing I should have to do would be to see your father and mother about it."

"Caught again!" muttered Ted. "You know you were warned that you'd be sent to school if father heard again of your smacking the kids, Gwen."

"Oh, shut up, can't you? What a beast you are, Ted!" And then Miss Gwendolen fled from the room. \

"I say," said Ted admiringly, "what a cute one you are! Did anybody tell you that she bullied the kids? You hit upon the one way of stopping her; she's afraid of the dad, and she doesn't want to go to school."

"I'm glad you are good to the little ones, Ted," said Betty, with a sweeter smile than she often vouchsafed to the other sex. "It is the sign of a brave man to be kind to those feebler than oneself."

"I want to go into the Army," said Ted, much gratified. "Do you think I should be really brave?"

foreign lands; they are more interesting than ghosts. Besides—" She shot a half glance at the children's listening faces, and Ted seemed to understand.

"I know what you mean. It doesn't do for them, eh? Well, we must have some of your adventure-stories, if you'll tell em—"

"And fairy-stories," said a new voice. And Betty suddenly saw a fair little face peeping at her from over the head of the sofa, and a big pair of grey eyes fixed entreatingly on her own.

"Yes; fairy-stories, too."

"Minna's a regular donkey about fairy-stories; I am sure *we* don't care for them," said Ted, in a lordly manner. "But you may tell us as many tales about fighting and treasure-hunting as you please."

"Turn and turn about," said Betty briskly. "I'll tell Minna a fairy-story one day, and you a fighting-story the next. That will be fair."

Ted looked at her doubtfully, and then smiled a little.

"It isn't often that a girl cares about things being *fair*," he said.

But I care. And Minna's going to care," said
ty, with a smile.

A pert kitchen-maid came in at that moment
take away the tea-things, and this seemed to
the signal for the schoolroom party to disperse.
I, who seemed to have constituted himself
ty's friend and mentor, hastened to give an
planation.

Gwendolen and I do lessons with father until
en o'clock," he said. "It's an awful grind.
e kids go down to the drawing-room for a
e while, so you can get a quiet time if you
."

Thank you very much for telling me," said
ty, in a friendly tone.

I am afraid we weren't very nice when you came
about the tea and everything. It was only done
a lark; we did not mean to be rude. I don't

her room she was half deluged by a stream from a jug which had been artfully balanced between the door and the lintel, so as to empty its contents on the next person entering the room. Betty thought herself lucky not to be cut by the broken jug as well as drenched with the water ; and she felt quite sure that the perpetrator of this " practical joke " must be Gwendolen.

CHAPTER XII

BEHIND THE WHEEL-HOUSE

establish two deck-chairs at the back of the wheel-house, and to occupy them every day in the company of one individual, is always a recognised part of every flirtation which is carried on at sea. The conversation may be trivial enough; but the sense of privacy lent to it by the position of the chairs is all-important; and it is rather pleasant to escape for a time from the inquisitive eyes of one's fellow-passengers. So at least thought the man with the fine dark face which had attracted Nora's attention when she came on board the *Argolis*; and, perhaps, it was for that reason that he wanted Nora

the flight of the sea-birds, and rejoicing in the consciousness that she was evading the eye of the world. She knew nothing about flirtation, and had no idea that it was one of the recognised amusements on an ocean steamer; she was only aware of a feeling of friendship for the young man who had shown her a good deal of quiet attention, and had managed to do it in so considerate a manner that she felt absolutely grateful to him for his kindliness.

For after the first three days of the voyage Mrs. Amber signalised herself by a violent quarrel with her friend Nora, and refused to treat her even with common civility. The cause was trifling enough. During those first three days Mrs. Amber had been a victim to sea-sickness, and had stayed in her cabin. Her husband was more slightly affected, and was able to go on deck after the first day. Nora was not sea-sick at all; and, consequently, took the Professor under her wing, and laughed and talked with him on deck or in the saloon, until he was quite charmed with her, and went out of his way to tell his wife what a delightful person he had found Miss Lysaght to be. It was a fatal confidence, and one which Mrs. Amber never forgave. In spite of her husband's eccentricities and her own, she was passionately in

love with him, and his praise of Nora excited her jealousy. She reproached Nora furiously with trying to attract the Professor, and when Nora rather haughtily repelled the accusation, burst into a flood of angry abuse, such as it was unlikely that Miss Lysaght would forgive, unless an ample apology were made for the outpouring. Nora froze at once ; she had no wish to wrangle, but she would not put up with insults ; and the result was a breach between the two women which nothing could repair. Then it was that Nora began to find out the wisdom of her cousin's advice to her before she left England. It would have been much better in every way if

Under these circumstances, Mr. Dale's kindness soon impressed itself on Nora. He sat beside her at meals, and seemed to grasp the situation. In fact, he saved it; for he thus rendered it impossible for Mrs. Amber to be openly rude to Miss Lysaght, and he used a system of gentle coercion by which the Professor was made to pay her the ordinary services of a gentleman. For the Professor, being mortally afraid of his wife, would have thrown Nora overboard with small ceremony if Millicent had requested him to do so. And Mr. Dale was useful in preventing any open hostilities, for there was something in his eye which compelled respect.

He was a silent man, with an habitual frown which spoke of earnest thought rather than of bad temper. His gravity, his silence, his inertia, made him more like a Spaniard than an Englishman; but when Nora laughingly questioned him, she found that he didn't own to a single drop of foreign blood.

"English to the backbone. Cumberland English, whatever that may mean. Cumbria was the haunt of the Picts and Scots. I go back to those days for my ancestry."

"I always fancied the Picts were little men."

"Then I don't resemble them, do I?"

He certainly did not. He was one of the biggest men that Nora had ever seen, although so perfectly proportioned that he seemed light and agile in comparison with other men.

"I don't know Cumberland at all," said Nora. "I have heard of the Langdale Pikes. I suppose you derive your name from the neighbourhood of the Dales of Cumberland?"

"Possibly. Many surnames have their roots in the land—like the people."

It was this kind of terse statement which

Nora watched him attentively. The sombre force that underlay his utterances attracted her. And she had heard from the Captain that Mr. Dale was a very rich man—almost if not quite—a millionaire. Therefore his remarks on the vanity of riches seemed to her wanting in point.

She said so presently, with a certain amount of circumlocution.

"It seems strange that one always wants what one cannot get. You are probably well off, or you would not sigh for poverty. Now I have seen the ills of poverty, and I have a dread of them."

"The ills of poverty," repeated Dale dreamily, "I should have said the blessings of poverty, the advantages of poverty, the fascination even of poverty as expounded by the wisest of the wise. St. Francis of Assisi and his Bride have more attraction for me than Mammon and Croesus."

"Artistically—æsthetically, yes; but would you give up the burden of your riches for an idea?"

"I hope so; if the idea were big enough."

"Well, the idea of St. Francis was big enough to embrace that horizon." She waved her hand vaguely to the clear line of sea and sky before

her; sitting behind the wheel-house, there was nothing else to see. The sky was exquisitely clear; the sea was almost without a ripple, and the *Argolis* sped onward to its destination like an arrow from the bow. "There are many ways of getting into harmony with the universe, besides the apparently crude one—'Sell all thou hast and follow me.'"

"Miss Lysaght, I begin to suspect you of socialism."

"You need not suspect me of anything so unpractical. But what I think is—why do we hear so little of what may be called compensation?

day, because her father had been drawn by a clever company promoter into the realm of speculation. He was ruined and committed suicide. But what is his daughter to do? Why don't the men who ruined her father give her back at least an income on which she could live? She is now leading the starved life of a nursery-governess, and she was brought up in luxury."

"It is very sad," he murmured. Then he was silent for a little time. "The case you mention," he said, "is sad enough; but there are others far more pitiful. Old people who have lost all they depended on: working folk whose little earnings have disappeared; these are the people I pity; not so much the frivolous young lady, who is driven to earn an honest livelihood instead of idling her time away."

"Do you think we all idle our time away?"

"I can't say; I don't want to make accusations when I know nothing about the subject."

"The subject? which subject? frivolity?"

"I meant the ordinary young lady," said Dale, with a touch of embarrassment. "But I know nothing about the species—that is what I ought to have said."

"Nothing about girls! Have you no sisters or cousins?"

"Neither. My mother died shortly after I was born."

"And had you no society?"

"What would you expect in the Cumberland hills?"

"But I thought you had been abroad a good deal?"

"At a German University," said Dale. "We saw a good many pretty German mädchen, I remember; but they were not a good introduction to the ordinary English girl."

answering smile. "Nobody can tell exactly whether he—or she—is clever, you always get that kind of knowledge from another person's eyes."

"Tell me my character, then!"

"How can I? I know so little—just a few things, and the rest is all mystery. I know you are quick and shrewd in judgment; but you are also liable to be misled by your inclinations. You want to enjoy everything, and you may end by enjoying nothing. You ask from life more than it can give you."

He stopped abruptly, as if he had said too much. Nora listened intently. When he paused she drew a long breath and looked at him with an oddly keen scrutiny.

"I don't know how you manage to know me so well. Everything you have said is perfectly true. But, perhaps, it is true of everyone. Do you never ask of life more than it has to give?"

"I ask nothing from life," he said shortly.

"Ah, because you have so much already."

"No; because I have nothing, and shall always have nothing. I am not speaking of what are called earthly goods; of these I have plenty. I have a good income, and I have not to work for it. But I have nothing else—neither home, nor

friends, nor love, nor anything that makes life worth living."

"But many of these things will come."

"No, I know they will not come. I have banished them from my heart for ever."

Nora started at the sternness in his tone. For the first time she realised that the man who spoke was in deadly earnest.

"For ever is a big word," she said slowly.

"Very big, isn't it? I only used a big word in order to make you understand that I had—as it were—"

"Renounced the world?"

She spoke with earnestness, even with emotion; and the man listened as if her words were music; nevertheless he did not pretend to agree. He shook his head.

"One's soul is not killed by solitude. To me, I should be doing more for myself if I plunged into the racket and the dissipation of the world, than if I hid myself in the Cumbrian wolds, or sought the savannahs of South America."

"But I don't see that you need do either one or the other. Why not think about an occupation, a hobby, or some useful work?"

"My dear Miss Lysaght, forgive me—but what is useful work?"

And then, as if he thought she could not possibly answer that question, he laughed, and asked her to play a game of Halma.

But Nora did not easily forget the conversation nor the curious hopelessness of the man. In all that he said, the spirit of an intense melancholy showed itself. The energy of the man seemed to be broken at the very spring; he had no care for himself nor for the people who surrounded him. Such a case of real, unaffected sadness of heart had never before come under Nora's observation,

and it interested her extremely. She occupied a good deal of leisure time in wondering what could have depressed him to this extent, and also the best way of ensuring his recovery. She noted that he was far more talkative and cheerful in her society than in that of any other person, and she sometimes felt inclined to think that a particularly long dose of her society would give him the fillip that he needed. Only, of course, it was quite impossible for her to say so; he would have to find it out for himself.

So the quiet, peaceful days passed on, and the merry party on board the *Argolis* made the old

Nobody knew exactly what was wrong. But the captain wore a worried look, and the officers and the crew seemed unusually busy. And then at last a word leaked out—a word which was sufficiently alarming to drive the blood from every lip, the one word, "Fire!"

It was in the hold, some persons averred, and it was quite under control. Some pieces of rubbish and refuse were burning, that was all. But in that evening, when the card-players had been sitting up so late, there came so pungent a smell of burning, so distinct a blue haze of smoke floating down the saloon, that the passengers took alarm. And while they were debating the matter, the machinery suddenly stopped short, and the steam whistle was blown twice as a signal of alarm, and a man with a white face put in his head to cry—

"Save yourselves! They're getting out the boats! The ship is on fire!"

CHAPTER XIII

THE LAST OF THE "ARGOLIS"

THERE is, perhaps, nothing in life so utterly overwhelming as the cry of "Fire!" on board a ship many miles from land. It seemed as though a universal shudder passed through the frame of

when allowed to drift. In stentorian tones the officers were giving orders to the crew, who were engaged in getting out the boats, and as is often the case at times of emergency, there was some extraordinary hitch in getting them ready, although it was felt that every moment was of importance and might be a matter of life and death. Dale, who went on deck to see whether he could be of any assistance, actually found that not one of the crew possessed a knife with which to cut the ropes, and considerable delay would have followed if he had not been able to produce the required implement.

The night was lovely. A soft, languorous summer night, it seemed, with a vault of velvety darkness, in which the stars glowed like fires above the heaving and slightly phosphorescent waves of the illimitable sea. Nora, who had collected her valuables and was waiting in the saloon, heard the capable stewardesses going from cabin to cabin, scolding here, hurrying there, always tactful and helpful, reassuring the children and consoling the women with assurances that there were plenty of boats and that there was no need to be afraid. There was no very great

disturbance anywhere. One of the younger officers stood in the companion-way, as if he had nothing to do but to keep up the spirits of the pretty girls with whom he had been dancing only the night before; but, as a matter of fact, he had his hand all the time clasped closely over a revolver in his hip pocket, and was quite prepared to proceed to extremities if there should be at any moment an ugly rush for the boats. By this time, the women and children were all gathered together in the saloon, and Nora crossed over to her former friend, Mrs. Amber, who was sobbing

awful, stifling smoke. Where's George? He won't be able to assist you, Nora, so don't look for help from him. At such a crisis as this, it is not likely that he will desert his own wife, even in your favour. Oh, good gracious! What is that? Is it the Captain's voice?"

It certainly was the Captain's voice, and in a few moments the white-bearded old skipper made his appearance at the door of the saloon.

"Ladies," he said, not forgetting, even at that supreme moment, to touch the peak of his gold-braided cap, "I am sorry to say that there seems to have been a slight accident on board, and that some of the planks have caught fire. Under the circumstances, we think it better to take to the boats, which are quite large enough for all of us, so that nobody need feel afraid. Will you, therefore, be good enough to come on deck at once—women and children first, please."

A hundred voices assailed him, a hundred hands caught at him, as he turned away.

"Oh, Captain, do tell us, is there any danger? Have we plenty of time, Captain? Shall we be saved?"

"Why, of course you will be saved," said the Captain cheerily. "There is no particular danger so long as everybody obeys orders. I am happy to say that we are in sight of land, and we ought to make it about dawn. Now, then, one by one, please. No crowding. You have plenty of time. Ah, Mr. Dale, coming down? I would not advise you"—this in a lower tone—"to go below. The smoke is getting very thick at that end."

"I am only going into the saloon," said Dale, with a smile. And then he made his way through the hurrying crowd and found himself at last at Nora's side. She was looking rather pale, but quite

moment, by a cloud of smoke. There was a suspicious crackling sound, also, and the smell of burning grew more insistent every moment.

"I have read of ships being burnt to the water's edge in twenty minutes," said Nora, with a face that had grown very pale. "I don't think this poor boat has much more time to last."

"Don't look that way," said Dale hurriedly. "There will be a panic if the women here see that flame; but I think there is plenty of time for everyone to get to the boats. Keep close to me and I will see that you are safely placed in one."

He had taken her hand and put it inside his arm, and now drew her gently towards the door, for they were near the tail of the little procession, and were, therefore, neither hustled nor squeezed.

"That's right, Mr. Dale," said the young officer in the companion way. "You are bringing up Miss Lysaght, I see. Gentlemen, forward now, please," and a crowd of white-faced, anxious-looking men pressed forward, while Dale conducted Nora to a spot where he thought that she would have the best chance of a good place in one of the boats.

"Look back just for one moment," he whispered to her, as they reached the deck, and looking back

she saw not only the mob of white faces and struggling dark figures, but a great red glare of light which had suddenly leapt into being from the interior of the saloon. It was quite plain that in a very few minutes there would be nothing but a sheet of fire rushing down the narrow corridors between the cabins, and cutting off every chance of escape for anyone who might have been accidentally left behind. Nora uttered a gasp of dismay.

"So near!" she said. "I didn't think that it would be so swift. I hope everybody has got out."

"Everybody, I think," said Dale, as he stood with her almost close to the steps up which she had

which means that some of us, at least, will have to jump. But don't be afraid. You will easily do it. You are light and active."

"And you—what will you do?" said Nora.

"Oh, I can swim like a fish. I shall drop into the water and be taken on board. Here's a life-belt, Miss Lysaght. You had better stick to it. Here we are. Here's your chance. Take the next place at the rail."

But Nora hung back. "I can't go before those children," she said. "Let me help them over first," and she made two little girls precede her, while Dale looked on with increased anxiety, for he saw that the boat was nearly full, and that the crew as well as the passengers were about to make a rush for the last boat, in which case it would probably be swamped.

"Go now," he said, with a terrible anxiety in his voice. "Don't wait another moment."

"You are coming?" she said.

"Yes, directly; but I must see you safe first. Come, you who were so brave a minute ago, you are not afraid to jump?"

Nora had not the instinct of fear. She was perfectly ready to do what she was told, so long as she was convinced of the wisdom of the person who

ordered her. And it was wonderful, even to herself, to realise the confidence that she placed in Mr. Dale. She jumped she scarcely knew how, and in another moment she knew that she had been received by kindly arms stretched out to break the impact of her fall. The boat swayed dizzily beneath her. It seemed to her crowded with figures, and dangerously near the surface of the water. Then suddenly the side of the steamer seemed to become alive with struggling and shouting figures. The other boat, as Nora learned later, had been injured in lowering, and was found to be not sea-worthy, and the thwarted crew, together with some of the rougher passengers,

its occupants found themselves struggling in the water.

For some few moments Nora did not know exactly what happened. It was all a chaos of struggling bodies around her, of shouts for help, and of a great flickering red light cast here and here upon the seething waters beneath which she began dimly to wonder that she did not sink. As her senses returned to her she found that it was the lifebuoy which upheld her, for she had clung to it in desperation when Dale made her jump, and during the two or three minutes that she had remained upon the boat she had with some premonition of danger got it into the right position beneath her arms, so that almost without volition of herself it sustained her when she was flung roughly into the sea.

But at first it seemed to her as though she were in a worse position than before. She was floating quietly away from the flaming ship, certainly, but also from the boats and the chance of rescue; and where was Mr. Dale, whom she had last seen in hand to hand combat with a brawny Portuguese sailor? If he had remained upon the burning ship he was certainly a doomed man. It was possible, however, that at the last moment he had got into

one of the boats, but hardly likely, seeing that his task was one of rescue, and that he would probably sacrifice his own life in the attempt to save others. Almost unconsciously she moaned and sobbed a little to herself, as she thought of the possibility of never seeing his face again. She remembered afterwards, as a curious thing, that she had not thought once of Gérard de Ruvigny, nor of her friends at home. Her whole mind was occupied by one care—for the safety of Julian Dale, whom, until the day she began this voyage, she had never met. What a ridiculous thing that a comparative stranger should thus occupy her thought! And even as she began

the whole ship's crew if he had thought it worth while to do so. He came to her at last, and rested one hand on the lifebuoy, while he paddled gently with the other.

"Thank God you are safe!" he said, "and that I have found you. I thought you had gone when I saw the boat go down."

"It went down?"

"Yes, for the moment. Of course it may float again; but I am afraid that we shall not hear any more of its occupants. Some, of course, may be saved; but I am afraid not all of them. Was Mrs. Amber in that boat?"

"I don't think so," said Nora. "I believe she got away in the first one that went off."

"Leaving you behind, I suppose? I thought she and her husband were to look after you?"

"They couldn't very well," said Nora, "because I didn't keep with them, and therefore they hadn't much chance of taking care of me. I think the Professor had quite enough to do in taking care of Mrs. Amber."

"Suppose we push on a little," said Dale, rather anxiously. "I am a little afraid of the old ship going down and dragging some of us with her. We

had better get out of reach of the whirlpool if we can. If I keep my hold on your lifebuoy, Miss Lysaght, I can swim more easily, and can help you, if you feel tired."

"Oh, yes, please," said Nora, "and then I shan't lose you again. Do you think we shall be saved?"

"Oh, yes, I think so," said Dale cheerfully. "As you heard the Captain say, there is land in sight. So long as the sea is comparatively calm there is no reason why we should not reach one of the islands by to-morrow morning."

"What islands?" Nora asked.

"I am not quite clear about their names," said

tallest masts. Then came the noise of a startling detonation, as something within the hold exploded, and a moment or two later the great flaming wreck turned over and was slowly dragged down, as it seemed, beneath the long glassy reaches of the waves. Dale and Nora watched as if fascinated, and remained watching until the last vestige of the old *Argolis* was gone. There was a great swirl of the water around them—a tremendous heaving and tossing, but fortunately the current was not strong enough to suck them down, and after a little while they felt that that last danger was spent.

CHAPTER XIV

THE ISLAND

"I HOPE nobody was on board," said Nora, at length breaking the silence which seemed to hem them round.

"I hope not," said Dale. "I trust that the Captain got off at the last moment; but we

"You have been here before, then, Mr. Dale?"

"No, I have not, but my father once visited South America, and although his steamer was not wrecked, he heard a good many tales of these islands, which are well known to seafaring men. I believe there is a cache of food and other articles for the benefit of shipwrecked sailors, so many seem to have taken refuge at different times on one of the Pikes."

"Do you see anything of the second boat?" said Nora anxiously.

Dale raised himself a little in the water and scanned its dark expanse.

"Look," he said presently, "there is a little moving light. I expect that is the lantern of the second boat. It seems to be going steadily enough. We must try to keep it in sight."

"And if we lose it?" said Nora, with a touch of nervousness in her voice.

"I have a compass in my pocket," he said, "and I shall have to steer as well as I can by that. But so long as the fine weather lasts it does not so much matter, because when daylight comes we shall be able to see the land for ourselves."

"If only we are not drifting further and further away from it now," she said.

"That is hardly possible so long as we can see the boat, for they are certainly making for the Greater Pike. You must not lose heart, now, when we have come through so much."

"I will try to be brave," she answered, rather faintly; "but I have grown so very tired during the last few minutes—I don't know why. I feel as if I couldn't support myself much longer."

Her voice, indeed, had grown strangely weak, and Dale realised that after the excitement of the evening, her strength was, perhaps, giving way.

lifebuoy. She even began to swim a little ; but as Dale did not want her to exhaust herself he checked this attempt, and told her to trust herself for the present to him. He then struck out manfully in the direction of the boat with the red lamp, and for some time neither of them spoke. Once he caught a sound, and found that Nora was crying a little to herself. He tried to cheer her with words of hope, but she cut him short.

"I am not a bit afraid for myself," she said ; "but I was thinking of all the pleasant people who were enjoying themselves so much last night, and what a terrible fate was reserved for some of them. I am afraid that many of the women and children were lost."

"Some of them were," said Dale, rather grimly ; "but I am still in hopes that we may meet with a great number of survivors. As for the Captain and the officers—I never met a finer set of men, nor men who stuck more faithfully to their duty—but I am very much afraid that some of them are gone. I fancy the Captain did not intend to leave the ship."

"Oh, but surely at the last moment ! It would be almost like suicide ! "

"He may have tried to save himself at the last moment," said Dale; "but of course the danger was that he might get entangled with the débris of the vessel and be swallowed up."

"Do you see the light now?" inquired Nora, in a faint voice.

Some few moments elapsed before he answered; then he seemed a little uncertain how to reply.

"I saw it just now," he said. "One can't always be quite sure, because of the waves, you know. It seems to me there is a little more swell than there was."

"You don't see it, then?" said Nora quickly.

it was, and she was possessed by such a feeling of utter exhaustion, that she did not very much try to make out what it was. Dale was growing seriously uneasy about her condition, for she seemed unable to help him any longer, and their progress was necessarily very slow. The dawn, however, grew and brightened in the heavens, and finally the sun shot up above the horizon like a great golden ball, and all the weary waste of water was laid bare. But there was no sign of the boat which he had seen on the previous night. Either it was lost in the distance, or it had foundered with all hands.

Suddenly, to his joy, he saw something moving in the water, and presently a shout came to him from over the waves. Two of the sailors had managed to fasten together a few planks and a tarpaulin, so as to make a kind of raft, and he hailed their appearance with relief, for they were both steady, sober seamen whom he could trust, and the fact of their being still alive gave him hope of coming across other survivors. The little raft was frail enough, but it bore the weight of Nora, who was with difficulty drawn out of the water by the three men ; but Dale refused to add his own weight to the burden. The raft, however, was of service to him for he could to

some extent support himself by it, and did not need to exhaust all his strength in swimming. The Greater and the Lesser Pikes loomed plainly before them. There was no reason why the Lesser Pike should not be reached in the course of a few hours. The difficulty was to steer their course to the place which they wished to reach. But this difficulty was vanquished by the sailors, who rigged up a small sail which caught the breeze, and wafted the frail vessel gradually nearer to the shore.

"We may find some of our friends there," said Dale, ploughing through the water with renewed hope, as he noted the gravelled beach of the Lesser

"I don't see no reason why that shouldn't have come safe to land."

"Do you think that they would make for the Greater or the Lesser Pike?"

"The Greater," said the man, rather gruffly, "seeing as how they don't know anything about this part of the world. They're pretty sure to try for the Greater Pike. But of the two I had sooner be on the little island than the big one."

"What is the matter with the bigger island, then?"

"No fresh water," said the sailor quietly. "Now, at the Lesser Pike there is a fresh water stream, and also a tank."

"You know the island, then?"

"All of us who goes to these coasts knows those islands, sir. There's been a lot of wrecks right off the rocks outside the Greater Pike, and there are some nasty shoals where a ship might easily come to grief. But there is a nice smooth space of beach at the Lesser Pike—though surely you must have been a sailor-man yourself, sir, to know the name?—and I have no doubt but that we shall make it safe enough if the current don't catch us and take us too far astern."

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As the day advanced, the Greater and the Lesser Pikes stood out with remarkable distinctness against the blue of the summer sky. They were evidently of volcanic origin, and the Greater Pike bore a certain resemblance to the Peak of Teneriffe on a smaller scale. The Lesser Pike, as Dale already knew, still bore a resemblance to an extinct crater. There was a deep, cup-like cavity in the interior, from which it seemed likely that smoke and fire had once spouted forth and devastated the surrounding land. The rocks were of black basalt, very barren and gloomy-looking; but inside the crater there was generally a crop

fish to be got at the bigger Pike, and there was a kind of clam, as they call it, which isn't bad eating; but there's plenty of crabs at the Lesser Pike."

"Well," said Dale, "if we have got to be thrown upon a desert island, it is just as well to find one that is properly victualled. Do you know whether there is any place that will serve as a shelter for this lady?"

"There used to be a bit of a shanty," said one of the men, "and there is a cave or two; but they are mostly damp. The young lady seems about wore out, sir," he added, in a kindly voice.

"She is, I am afraid," said Dale. "I will give her a drop of whisky and water if you can manage to raise her a little," and the feat was accomplished, although not without difficulty, for as they neared the shore they became conscious of a swell, and the raft was tossed about like a cork on the surface of the waters.

But to Dale's delight Nora seemed revived by the stimulant. She opened her eyes and smiled at him, so that although he was rendered very uneasy by the signs of general weakness in her condition, he knew at least that she was in her right senses, and

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that the events of the night had not been altogether too much for her.


Nearer and nearer the black sides of the island loomed before them. Dale's eyes were fixed upon the stretch of beach at which he hoped to land. And after various efforts attended by only partial success, the three men managed to direct the course of their little raft towards the smoother part of the beach. Once in shallow water, they could get off and push it ashore, and Dale directed them to be careful to beach it high and dry, for there was no knowing whether it might not be wanted again, and in any case it was just as well to have a supply of

touch, and the men went some distance before they found the entrance to the cave, which was well known to exist upon the Lesser Pike. To this cave they assisted Nora, and the tarpaulin made a seat for her, where she could lie down in safety while the men made a further exploration of the island. Dale lingered for a little while in the hope of finding some way of making her more comfortable ; but, as she assured him, she wanted nothing more than a good long sleep, for her clothes had been dried by the heat of the sun, and all she wanted was bodily rest.

"Would you like one of us to remain with you ?" said Dale. "I think, on the whole, it would be better if I left Burbage within hail."

"There is no danger?" she said, looking up at him with wide-open eyes.

"None that I know of. The only thing I thought of for a moment was whether the island was inhabited by any other shipwrecked crew ; but that is a very unlikely thing, seeing that nobody has hailed our arrival, or made any sign of life."

"I am not in the least afraid," said Nora. "I am sure you had better take Burbage with you, to help explore the island. As for me, I shall be asleep in 

two minutes. I positively can't keep awake any longer."

Dale forced her to eat another biscuit before she slept, and then she fulfilled her words by quietly turning over on one side and falling asleep almost immediately. He stood for a moment regarding her in silence, while she slept, and in his eyes there was something of a new-born light—the light of reverence rather than of love. He was there to guard her from harm, to convoy her safely back, perhaps, to her native land, and if he succeeded in doing that he would have found an answer to a question which had lately been distressing him a good deal: the question whether

bound to dole it out in small doses, for that is all we have, and the lady may be more in need of it than we are."

The men accepted the spoonful that he offered in silent ravishment, and uttered grunts of approval.

"Now, if I'd a pipe," said one of them, "and a handful of bacca, I should think I was all right."

"Perhaps," said Dale, "the people who left stores here have left some tobacco. We must go and hunt for them."

"It's more likely," said one of the men, "that the stores are in the cave where we left the lady; but as we don't want to disturb her we can go round the island first. There is sometimes a second cache right up in the rocks."

They went on their expedition; but for some time it was weary work, as the black rocks were hot and slippery. But inside the crater they came to a place which was like a dream of beauty to the sea-stained men. Here a bubbling stream sprang from between the rocks, and brought forth leaves and flowers on every side. The black volcanic earth was fertile enough when it had moisture, and although the vegetation was not large nor abundant, Dale noted with pleasure that two or three palm-trees were in

existence, as well as the wild apricot, which was already covered with singularly unripe looking fruit. They found a cave which contained some cooking utensils and other useful articles; but so far, there was no trace of concealed food. They returned to the beach quite as hungry as they had set forth. But they had had a good draught of fresh, pure, spring water, and they had brought back with them a supply for present uses, and for Miss Lysaght.

"It is all we can do at present," said Dale. "And now, lads, I think we had better turn in. When we have had a good sleep we shall, perhaps, be able to think more clearly of what we ought to do."

CHAPTER XV

IN OAKSTEAD PARK

IT was extraordinary to see the progress which Betty made in the affections of her pupils during the first few days of her residence at the Vicarage. She seemed to have fascinated them one and all. The only exception was in the case of Gwendolen, who maintained her attitude of defiant contempt. The others, after the first somewhat suspicious inspection, surrendered their hearts without ado. Betty was adored by her pupils, and quite willingly became their slave.

Therein lay the difficulty of the matter. She could not deny them anything. Whether she was tired or not, she was always ready to tell stories, to play the piano, to go for a walk. Such a complaisant governess had never been seen. In return, however, for her readiness to oblige she had an artful way of expecting attention and

obedience in lesson-time; and after two or three half-hearted rebellions (undertaken by way of experiment rather than from malice), the children found it better to acquiesce; and in time came even to the point of finding pleasure in their lessons.

With Ted and Gwendolen, Betty had really little to do in their hours of study. They were taught by the Vicar, who was giving them a good, sound, classical education, finding Gwendolen rather the quicker pupil of the two; and Betty did not feel herself competent to assist them in their lessons. Gwendolen knew a great deal more

"You had better use a dictionary," Gwendolen said. "Oh, here she is at the door, listening; listeners hear no good of themselves."

"You were speaking ill of me, then, were you?" said Betty, with a smile.

Gwendolen was so manifestly cantankerous that her mood and temper did not try the governess so much as if they had proceeded from a nicer girl. But Gwendolen scarcely understood Miss Carrington's quiet indifference to her. She had been accustomed to be scolded or cried over; she had prided herself on the readiness with which she could reduce her instructresses to tears. It was quite provoking to have a creature in the schoolroom who only smiled when Gwendolen herself intended to be provoking, and who did not seem even to trouble herself to listen to the unkind things (Gwen meant them to be witty and clever) that Gwen spoke. It was ridiculous to have a governess with so little sense of what was becoming. The girl actually burst into a tirade one day on the subject of the books Miss Carrington read. She did not think that French novels ought to be brought into the schoolroom, and she thought that she should tell her mamma

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about Miss Carrington's tastes. Betty made no answer but smiled a little, for her paper-covered volume had been a copy of the well-known *Récit d'une Soeur*. But as Gwendolen raised her voice and talked more bitterly than ever, Betty suddenly looked at her with serious and rather pitiful eyes.

"You are quite mistaken in what you say, Gwendolen. The book is not a novel and it is fit to put into anybody's hands. In fact, it is a memoir of a very pure and noble character."

"It is all very fine to say so, but you wouldn't let me read it the other day. It *must* be a bad book if a girl of my age may not read it," said Gwen, with

Betty trembled for the result of this interposition. It seemed to her that a pitched battle might follow, but to her surprise there was a dead silence. Gwendolen flushed scarlet and said nothing at all; Ted continued to read, and then three of the younger children giggled audibly. Everyone liked to see Gwendolen snubbed; but when presently she swept out of the room with a great rustle of her skirts, Betty laid down her work and looked over at Ted.

"Dear boy," she said, "I wouldn't say such things to Gwendolen if I were you."

Ted threw down his book and came over to the sofa on which she was sitting.

"If I didn't keep her in order," he said, "you'd have an awful time of it, do you know?"

"But you must be kind to her," said Betty.

"I'm as kind as I can be; quite as kind as is good for her," said the boy. "What a fool she made of herself just now. I suppose that's quite a nice, jolly book, isn't it?"—touching the yellow paper cover of the volume on her knee.

"Well, it is nice but I don't know whether you would call it jolly. It is a book that speaks a great deal about religion."

"I don't call that particularly jolly; I call that dull. Who do you think I met in the woods just now who was asking me about you?"

"I can't imagine."

"Oh, yes, you can; don't you pretend!" said Ted severely. "It was Sir Philip Evelyn."

"Very kind of him," said Betty, with a smile.

"He wanted to know how you were, and whether we made you happy and contented, and when I told him you were an awfully good sort, and we liked to do what you wanted, because you were so pretty and nice, he looked awfully pleased."

"Nonsense, Ted!"

the Evelyns and that they had turned you out, so that was why you were obliged to find a situation as nursery-governess. Don't tell her I said so, will you?"

"Oh, but Ted that is quite a wrong story. Mrs. Evelyn pressed me to stay. They were quite vexed at my leaving them, I believe."

"Yes, I expect they were pretty sick at losing you. But you can always give mother the credit of being able to invent a tale."

"Ted, I can't listen to you if you talk in that way about your mother."

"I'm not talking about my mother. I'm talking about Sir Philip. He asked why you didn't bring the kids into the Park. I said I'd take you there on the first fine day; but you had not told us we might go. And he said he had told you they might."

"I'm afraid—I forgot," said Betty, with a troubled air.

"You forget now and then," said Ted, watching her, "but when you remembered, you did not want us to go."

"Really and truly," said Betty, "I'm afraid about the animals in the Park. If the children

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tease them or throw stones at them, I don't know what would happen. And the children do throw stones sometimes, don't you see?"

"I'll go with you, and prevent them from throwing stones," said Ted gallantly. "Shall we go to-morrow? It would be most awfully jolly."

"Very well; if it is fine, we will go to-morrow. It is very kind of Sir Philip to give us permission," said Betty, with much precision. "Did he tell you whether he had heard of the safe arrival of the *Argolis*?"

"No; he said nothing about it."

"It must be very late," said Betty, rather uneasily.

grass; she was not at all surprised to find Sir Philip near her, nor to hear his kind and friendly voice.

"Have you news yet of Nora's boat?" she asked.

"No; but it is early days for that yet. We shall probably hear in a day or two. And how are you getting on?"

"Very well, thank you."

"You don't look worn out yet; that is something to the good. Are they kind to you?"

"Oh, yes. And I am very fond of the children."

"Even of Miss Gwendolen! That young lady is my detestation."

"I don't mind her. She is a rude, badly-brought-up, young person, but she may improve in time. At present I don't take much notice of her."

"This is a great improvement on the method of your predecessors," said Sir Philip, laughing. "I have always been told that Gwendolen was the thorn in the side of all the ladies who attempted to instruct the little Neves."

"She is a foolish young girl," said Betty quietly. "She tries to make me angry, but I am not angry

with her at all. By-and-by she will get tired of being always foolish."

"And the others?"

"Oh, they are dear children, and I think they like me. I have no trouble with them."

"Do they obey you?"

"I think so," said Betty doubtfully. "I don't often want anything done that they can't do. And children are very reasonable; I think they are better logicians than grown-up people, because they take everything literally. If you can convince them that lessons are as necessary as play, they will do the lessons quite cheerfully."

you very much for letting us come into the Park."

"When are you coming to have tea with my aunt?"

"Does she want me?"

"Very much indeed; and"—in a lower tone—"so do I."

"You always like to make fun of me, Sir Philip," said Betty, a little reproachfully.

"I make fun of you! The gods forbid! I only want you to think kindly of me, so that I may believe in myself. You don't utterly dislike me, do you—Betty?"

Every line of Betty's face and body expressed surprise. She could not possibly answer the question, the shock was too great. Sir Philip represented everything that was perfect to her; why, then, should he be so presumptuous as to call her by her Christian name without permission?"

"I think we must go," she faltered.

"Answer my question," said Philip peremptorily. "Do you dislike me?"

"No."

"Do you like me at all?"

"Oh, yes," she said, blushing a little; "I like you very well."

"Enough to make you promise—to be my wife some day, Betty?"

But at this question Betty gathered up her skirts and ran.

CHAPTER XVI

STRANDED

A TROPICAL sun: a blazing sky; a hard barren rocky land, from which it seemed as though every heat-ray scintillated sevenfold. That was the environment of the waifs and strays who had found a refuge on the Lesser Pike Island after the burning of the *Argolis*. The only way in which to keep cool was to ensconce oneself in the darkness of the caves. Here, although the sun was still hot, there was a sensation of coolness, and the sound sometimes of running water, which is always refreshing when the heat is great. But the one disadvantage of the caves was great; it was impossible to get a good view of the horizon-line from their shelter; and yet it was imperative that a good look-out should be kept, so that signals might be made to any ocean steamer that came within signalling distance.

Mr. Dale, who seemed to have assumed command

of the little party, found himself obliged to divide the day and night into watches of equal length ; he and the sailors taking it in turn for two hours each. Nora implored him to let her help, but he refused to allow her to run the risk of sunstroke by watching in the day-time, or of chill by watching at night. She was therefore reduced to the ignominious position of a mere companion to one of the watchers—Mr. Dale, to wit ; who declared with a smile that he was never half so tired when she shared the watch with him as when he was alone, and that it was evident she bore half the burden and half the fatigue.

He managed to put up a little shelter for her on

low opinion of himself—so low that at first she treated a manifestation of it as a form of affectation. He could not be in earnest, she thought, when he told her in quite a cool, matter-of-fact way, that he had learnt to have no faith in himself, that he believed himself capable of committing any crime that the world had seen. "You know the old story," he said, "of Bradford, the preacher, who pointed to a man going to execution, and said: 'There, but for the grace of God, goeth John Bradford'?" Well, I feel like that—except that, perhaps, I say: 'But for education and circumstance and an absence of poverty, *there* would go Julian Dale, whose instincts and impulses would have led him probably to the gallows if he had not been restrained.'

"But what a terrible thing to say," said Nora, looking and feeling aghast. "If what you say is true, you must remember that it applies to all of us. And yet I'm sure I do not feel any inclination to commit theft or murder or any other crime."

"How do you know?" said the man, without smiling. "You have not been tried. But forgive me," he added, after a moment's pause, "for saying such a thing. I should have remembered that your pure soul is never disturbed by the more violent

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storms of temptation and evil. It is woman's *métier* to be good ; a man's struggle for goodness is a more difficult thing."

"I never heard anyone take your view," said Nora. "I thought women were considered weaker than men, and therefore likely to fall into greater errors."

"Errors of judgment. I did not mean to say that women were infallible."

There was a little irony in the smile.

"But if men are so much stronger—in mind as well as body—they should have a stronger will to do what is right."

"Have you found it so?" he said, turning to her

"Have you yourself known many?" she asked, with almost childish interest.

"A good many. One runs up against them pretty often when one journeys about the world as I have been doing lately. And I think there's a fair collection of them in South Africa."

"Then that is why you think so badly of men. You have had some unfortunate experience which has embittered you?"

Julian Dale laughed.

"I did not say I thought badly of men in general, did I? I said I thought badly of myself. After all, Miss Lysaght, I am perfectly orthodox. It has been said that the heart of man is full of deceit and desperately wicked."

"But that was said in days long ago, when people knew little of ethics or religion," said Nora, hesitatingly.

"I don't know; I think old King David had a realising sense of both. 'Create in me a new heart,' he prayed; he did not seem to have much opinion of his own in its original state. He was a very human, natural man."

"I don't like him," said Nora sharply. "He always seems to me so weak."

"Most men are weak."

"But not so weak as David."

"Nor so deeply penitent."

"I hate penitence," cried Miss Lysaght; "it always annoys me to think that people can fancy they atone for their sins by penitence! If they make practical reparation for the evil things they have committed, I should have more sympathy with them; but it seems futile to think that a little empty penitence should wash out the stain and undo the wrong."

"Surely it is not always an empty penitence."

"No; if you mean that the person who repents

until he had confessed his crime. He made a clean breast of the thing a few weeks ago, and gave himself up to the police."

"But that was not reparation."


"I beg your pardon?—"

"Not in the least. What good did his confession do to anybody? It could not bring the murdered person back to life. If it could have profited anybody, I would believe in the value of his confession; but as a matter of fact, it probably gave a great deal of trouble and distress to his family and friends, and did nobody any good at all."

Dale smiled gravely at this opinion.

"You forget the man's own conscience which compelled him to the confession. He had a right to satisfy his conscience, in spite of the grief of his family and the contempt of his fellow men. You forget that."

"No," said Nora positively; "I don't forget it. I deny it. Your criminal was very selfish. He preferred his own comfort to that of his fellow creatures. It would have been better for him to keep silence to the end."



"And suppose someone else were accused of the murder?"

"Oh, in that case, I suppose he would have to speak out. But short of that—if it were simply to ease his conscience!—then I would say that he was making a mistake."

"We shall have to agree to differ. I am not in the least of your opinion, I am sorry to say."

"No; you are much more—what shall I call it?—old-fashioned in your views than I expected! I thought you were a very modern man," said Nora, in rather a regretful tone.

"Is that a complaint or otherwise?" said Dale,

didn't want to think that there was any solid reason for the rigorous view which her new friend seemed to entertain. She thought it advisable to change the subject, and she tried to think of something to say ; but greatly to her surprise, the words didn't come easily to her lips ; it seemed to her as though some profound embarrassment seized upon her and silenced her. Dale also sat silent, with the look of a man lost in serious thought.

Suddenly Nora sprang to her feet. "Look ! look !" she cried, pointing with her finger to one quarter of the horizon. "Smoke !—a steamer ! Surely you see."

He was on his feet also, staring at the little trail of smoke on the horizon with a face that had grown strangely white.

"Yes," he said in a low voice, "it is a steamer, but not upon our track. It is not coming this way."

"Surely we can do something. If we light the beacon they will see the smoke."

"The beacon " was a small pile of dried turf and leaves, which the shipwrecked party intended to fire if there were any chance of its smoke being seen from afar. It was only a few yards away, and Dale turned towards it hesitatingly, his hand grasping a

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little silver match-box which had been wrapped in a waterproof material, and had almost miraculously escaped injury from the sea-waves. The half-dozen vestas which it contained were too precious to be lightly used, and Dale turned and looked once more before he would consent to light the pile. Then he shook his head.

"It is no use. We had better not waste our blaze. The smoke is gone already; the people on board would not see us."

"You're sure?"

"Only too sure."

She covered her face with her hands and turned

I am sure of it. People have been stranded here before now—”

“Yes, and we found their graves!”

She alluded to the discovery of those three mounds of earth in the interior of the crater, with names and dates cut roughly on a slab of stone above them; they had struck a chill to every heart when they were seen.

“Someone must have dug their graves,” said Julian. “Some must have escaped. That means that a boat came for them sooner or later. Oh, we shall get back to England, never fear; you, because you wish, and I because I do not.”

“You do not want to get back?”

“I could stay here for ever.” Then he added, in the lowest possible voice: “If it were *with you*.”

“With—*me*?”

She felt that she ought to be angry, ought to spring to her feet and indignantly reprove the man for saying such a thing. But perhaps the spirit had been taken out of her by the privations of the last few days. For it was becoming increasingly difficult to get food of a kind that she could eat. The shell-fish which the men found in the rocks was to her exceedingly

distasteful, and even the fish sickened her. There were few birds on the island, and scarcely any edible fruit or vegetables. It seemed difficult to understand how life could be sustained at this rate, and no doubt the scanty fare had weakened her. She felt that she had no strength within her to fight for herself.

And after all, did she *want* to fight? Was there not some sensation of pleasure at feeling that this man, whom she already admired, had come to care for her? She had been struck, time after time, by the man's strength of character, his resource, his helpfulness, his power of quiet

He mistook her silence, and thought that she was offended. Stooping down a little, he touched her gently on the arm.

"You must forgive me," he said. "I spoke without thinking; I only said what was in my heart."

"But it was in your heart?"

"Yes, indeed it was. Do you give me leave to say more?"

"I suppose I can hardly prevent you," said Nora, trying to be resentful, and not knowing how.

"I don't want to vex you. I had made up my mind never to say a word; because—I don't mean to marry. Therefore it is no use for me to speak to a woman about love. But just because it is so useless, you might let me speak for once and once only in my life."

She listened; he saw from her attitude that she was listening, but she did not speak.

"I never in my life told a woman that I loved her," the man went on, in a quiet tone. "For years I set my ideal so high that I met no one who approached it. And then the events happened that spoiled my life for me, and I thought no

more of love and happiness. All that was dead for me—until I saw you.”

“But why—why should it be dead for you?”

“That is a long story. I had, at any rate, no thought of any woman in my mind when I saw you—Nora. I may call you, Nora, may I not? just for to-day. I shall then always be able to remember what it feels like—to call you by your name.”

“I like to be called Nora,” said the girl, in a stifled voice.

“Then, just for a little while, I will call you Nora. Just while I tell you that I love you—

CHAPTER XVII

THE EXPLANATION

"DON'T ask me for explanations," said the man. "It is better to give none, in such a case as mine. I can only tell you that, unworthy as I am, I am utterly yours—'beyond repose, I am thine'; and you will live for ever in my heart, enshrined as the one woman beyond compare, the one woman to whom my soul is captive. You do not know what it is to love like that—few women do, and your time has not come—"

Had it not? Nora thought of de Ruvigny, and suddenly turned cold. He had held her hand and poured sweet nothings into her ear, wholesale. Once he had kissed her. And she had made a secret arrangement with him that they should meet in the West Indian island where he had obtained an appointment; and although she had not chosen to say so to Betty, she knew pretty

well that the Count intended to beg her to remain as his wife. Out of England he seemed to think that he could defy the English Courts of Chancery; and Nora was as ignorant of their power as he. In her mood of adoration, of happy defiance, she had not cared to investigate her legal standing, nor the penalties which a husband would incur for marrying her without legal consent; and the consequence was, as she remembered with a horrified start, that the Count de Ruvigny was probably confidently expecting her as his promised bride. How she loathed the girlish folly, the rebellious impatience, which had urged her to take

never dreamed that love could be so powerful; all I had seen of it consisted of the ravings of sentimental boys, or the excitement proceeding from a coarser kind of passion that you would not understand. I had a wrong conception of love as it exists, and the kind that I pictured to myself as ideal, beautiful, heavenly—that is not in my power to take.”

“Are you married?” said Nora frankly.

“Married! Thank Heaven, no.”

“Then why—why should you cut yourself off—”

“You think there is no other barrier? Ah, how can I tell you? You, so dear, so true, so full of high conceptions of heroism that you cannot even believe in a man’s repentance when he has done amiss.”

“Try me! try me!” Nora cried. “I was talking for talking’s sake. I assure you that I do believe in sincere and true repentance. Besides,” her voice fell a little, “I cannot think that you have ever done anything so very bad.”

“You mean me to tell you?” he said, with a sound of pain in his voice. “I would rather you would spare me that. Take my word for it, you will be sorry when I have spoken.”

"You mean," said Nora, with a tremor in her voice, "that you expect me to let you go, after you have said you loved me, without the slightest explanation of your reasons for giving me up?"

"But—Nora—it can't be—you don't mean that you *care*?—that you love me! Oh, my God, this is the worst of all!"

He stood up and stretched out his arms in impotent appeal to the Invisible Controller of his fate; and Nora was stricken dumb with a sense of awe. For the anguish in his face was unspeakable; never had she dreamed of such extremity of woe. Almost she told him not to reveal his secret; she

"Nora, Nora," groaned the man at her side, "if you loved me as I love you, you would not ask me to tell you the history of my past life."

"Wouldn't you ask me, if I hinted at some secret that you were not to know? It is only just that you should tell me."

"Perhaps you are right. Yes, I suppose you have a claim to know the truth—since I have told you of my great love for you, and why I must not carry it to its consummation."

"But," said Nora, rather hesitatingly, "why not wait now and tell me afterwards? You see we are here together in this desert island, it is almost necessary that we should be friends. Let us leave any disagreeable subject for the future; let us be happy together—while we may—tell me when we are parting, when the day comes to take us away."

In any other person, Julian Dale would have recognised the subtlety of this advice. For if Nora allowed him to make love to her, and if she reciprocated that love, it was ten chances to one that Julian would even find courage to tell her the story of his past. It would be impossible for them to separate after days, weeks, months, of love-making. Julian could have smiled at the suggestion, which

proceeded, he thought, from Nora's sweet simplicity. It was however possible that Nora was not quite so simple as she seemed.

"No, that is not possible—it would not be right," he said, a trifle sternly. "If you are to be told at all, I must tell you now."


"Not now," she said, with a sort of nervous shrinking from the revelation which was possibly to be made. "Joel is just coming up to relieve you; let us wait until some time when we shall not be interrupted. This evening, when it is cooler and the stars are out."

He paused and then assented rather helplessly.

life, she saw herself threatened with an irreparable loss. It must not be. She could not possibly permit this lover of hers to renounce her for conscience' sake. Whatever it was that he had done, she must know of it; she must be told the extent of his guilt. She had not the slightest doubt in her readiness to forgive the fault of which he had been guilty. Even if it were something to do with another woman (and Nora had enough knowledge of the world to be aware that this was the most probable cause of his remorse), she felt that she could pardon it—knowing him as she did. He might have loved a strange woman—some daughter of Heth—in his extreme youth; but she was perfectly certain that he loved her now—and her alone.

So she bided her time, hoping to be able to soothe his pain, and to solace him for the wrong that he had done. She knew something of her own power; she knew that in the semi-darkness she could dare to lay her hand in his, perhaps to lean her head against his shoulder; and her whole frame thrilled at the thought of that personal contact with her beloved which every woman loves.

The scanty evening meal had been eaten and the last trace of sunlight had faded from the sky, when



Nora, sitting alone on a projecting rock overlooking the sea (a rude bench had been cushioned so that she should not sit upon the cold stone), heard the firm footstep of the man who was to make his confession to her, descending the rugged track from the highest point of the island, where he had been to make his last observations for the night. She shivered a little with delicious intensity of emotion as he drew near. What would he do? Would he sit or stand? Would he touch her? She longed for his touch; she determined that if possible she should hold his hand while he spoke.

But all her anticipations and resolutions came to

name, although my present surname is not my own."

"You are not called Dale?"

"Dale is the last half of my surname."

"But why did you change it?"

"Because, my dear, my sweetest and dearest and only love—because I am—a murderer."

"Julian, how *can you*—how dare you say such a thing?"

"Why not, if it is the truth?"

"It can only be the truth in some figurative, non-natural way. You should not use such words."

"But what word can I use, Nora? It is the plain fact that two—nearly three—years ago, I killed a man; and if I had not fled from justice I should have been tried for his murder. This is plain speaking; this is the fact. That is why I call myself Dale."

"Was it in England?" she asked, feeling herself turn cold.

"No; in Germany."

"A duel?"

"Yes."

"But that is not murder."

"I believe that in God's eyes it is."

"Ah, I knew it was something of this kind," said

Nora passionately. "Some fad, some crank, which nobody else would think worth considering. How many men have not fought duels in days gone by? Did they all call themselves murderers? They were not so morbid, so self-absorbed as you seem to be. Was not the man trying to kill you? Why, you were acting only in self-defence."

"No," he answered steadily. "I have thought it out many times, and I have come to the conclusion that I shall have to answer to God for his life. You see, the circumstances were peculiar. I had no business to fight a duel with him at all. I and my family had injured him; he sought to punish me;

"You fought with swords?"

"We did."

"All German students do. I never heard of one of them who took the view you do. It is overstrained—unnatural. Dear Julian, you do not really mean to let an accident of that kind poison your whole life? You are not going to make me unhappy now?"

"I am afraid," said the man, after a pause, "that I cannot change my views even to please you, Nora. Perhaps I take a narrow view of my obligations. I made a compact with myself when I fled from Germany. I said that for my father's sake I would fly and do my best to escape arrest and punishment; but if I did that, I would abjure all personal self-indulgence, then and always."

"Then what about this cruise?" said Nora quickly.
"It was a pleasure-cruise."

"I was looking for some one," he answered, "and I knew that he was to be found in the West Indian Islands. That was my sole reason for leaving England. When I have done what I meant to do, I shall make full acknowledgment of my action to the authorities, and submit to any penalty they choose to inflict. I don't suppose it will be hanging; but it may be imprisonment."

"You will not do anything so mad?"

"I am not mad, most noble—lady. I want to do my duty; that is all. It's very simple. You see, however, why I say that I cannot ask you to join my life to yours. It would not be fair. It would have been an insult to do so without telling my history."

Nora sat up straight and looked out at the sea, with her hands clenched on her lap. She no longer wanted him to touch her. She was, in fact, suffering keenly from a reaction from the emotional moment that had preceded the interview. Possibly Julian knew her better than she knew herself. After a

you killed—don't tell me—it wasn't Carrington? Oh, don't say that it was Carrington!"

"Yes, it was Noel Carrington."

Nora threw up her hands to her face, and burst into tears.

"You knew him?" said Julian in a quiet voice, when the worst of the tempest seemed to be over.

"His sister—she is my dearest friend."

"Sister!" cried Julian, in a tone of horror. "You don't mean to tell me that he had a sister? I always heard that when her father committed suicide, not a member of the Carrington family was left."

"Perhaps you hoped so!" cried Nora vindictively.

The exclamation showed how far she had travelled from the mood she had experienced and encouraged when first she took her seat upon the bench and looked out to the dim phosphorescence of the sea.

CHAPTER XVIII

SEVERANCE

"Ah, Nora," said Julian Scarsdale very sadly, "it is your turn to misjudge me now."

"Indeed I do not wish to misjudge you," she said harshly. "Only I must remind you that I have not had the materials for a correct judgment until

"What do you mean?" he said, in a tone not devoid of surprise.

"I mean the very fact that you are your father's son."

There was a pause, then Julian moved back uneasily.

"I would rather you did not condemn him. I loved my father, although I do not approve all the things he did."

"Really! But you do your best to condone them! You have inherited his money, have you not?"

"I have."

"The money made from the ruin of widows and orphans; money which must be red with blood! Oh, Julian, I should have expected better things from you."

"What would you have had me do?"

"Not trouble me about imaginary sins to begin with. A duel is not murder, if it is fairly conducted, and you know it. But while you make moan over poor young Carrington's death, you forget the weightier matter of the law—especially you forget justice. You have money which your father left you, and you keep it, you enjoy it, you

spend it lavishly, without ever trying to repair the wrongs he did."

"It is almost impossible to trace the career of all the people who lost money through him," said Julian, in a tone of remonstrance. "If I had had the money and the power immediately after the failure of the Company, I might have done something; but, you see, my father did not die until some time afterwards. By that time, the clues were lost."

"If you had urged upon him the necessity of doing something, could you not have prevailed?"

"I do not think so."

He did not tell her that he had never said

you can make, yet it has not reached my ear, that you have attempted it."

"It is a difficult matter to adjust claims of that kind," he said, after a pause for consideration.

"Not in all cases. Take young Carrington's sister; she was at school with me. When the crash came she was left without a friend in the world. Her father committed suicide; her brother met with his death in Germany; she had neither money nor relations, and she was obliged to earn her own living. She earned it so well that she very nearly starved. Fortunately she came to me, and I was able to help her over the worst. She is in a situation now as a nursery governess."

She felt him wince.

"You have seen her," she went on, "though you may not recollect exactly. She came to see me off on the day when we started. You sat opposite us for a time in the saloon. I remember it quite well, because Betty Carrington and I discussed your appearance."

"I remember her very well," said Scarsdale. "She was very pale and delicate looking."

"Yes, she is very white. She had to go through

great hardships, you see, when her father and brother died—”

“Oh, for Heaven’s sake, Nora,” cried the man, starting aside as from an intolerable pain, “don’t rub it in.”

“I hardly know what you mean,” said Nora loftily. “I think that this subject should not be discussed in terms of slang.”

“It is unnecessary to discuss it any further,” said Julian, in a determined tone. “I have told you the truth about myself, and I am quite sure that you agree with me now as to the impossibility of a marriage between us. I said so from the first; and

"But from the wrong motive!"

"What motive do you wish me to have?"

"I would rather you forgot all about the duel, the evil of which you could not foresee. If you had sacrificed your fortune to pay your father's creditors, I could at least have honoured you."

"In fact," said Scarsdale dryly, "you value life less than money."

"Indeed, I do not."

"You talk as if you could forgive me for killing a man, but not for using money which you think ought to belong to some one else."

"It is a meanness," said Nora, almost inaudibly, "and meanness I can never forgive. It seems to me worse than—an accident in a duel."

"You take the ordinary woman's view," said Julian. And then there was silence between them for a little while, for Nora was almost too angry to speak.

"Let the episode end here," Scarsdale said at last, in his usual voice. "We need never refer to it again. I must apologise to you most sincerely, Miss Lysaght, for the trouble I must have given you. I hope you will not think again of what I have said to-day."

"Certainly it is better forgotten," said Nora,

Reparation

hiding her hurt pride under a mantle of dignity. "I will ask you also to forget what I said."

"Of course I shall forget it. I know you said some things under a misapprehension. We will consider them all unsaid."

"You will never refer to them again, I hope."

"Never—unless you yourself were to make the reference."

"I shall never do that. And also, I should like to tell you, that I will never tell anyone who you are, or anything about your story. You may trust me to that extent."

had camped out in her immediate neighbourhood, without letting her know.

For the first time they parted coldly without touching each other's hand. Scarsdale felt unreasonably sore and angry at her tacit avoidance of the ordinary civilities of life. She might at least, he thought, have responded to his good-night. She said nothing at all as she turned away. He was left to conclude that she had made up her mind not even to be his friend.

He did not sleep that night—neither did she. In the morning, she complained of headache, and refused to come to breakfast. He tramped round the island, seeking anxiously for something that could tempt her to eat; risking his life for seagull eggs, and spending hours in a vain attempt to snare a brace of frightened birds.

By dinner-time she was more reasonable, and condescended to say a few words to him in the presence of the sailors. But he understood that she was not to be betrayed into any civilities, and that the days of companionship were past. He missed her frightfully. The hours that he spent watching for a sail seemed to be leaden-footed; they would not pass. There were no quiet chats together; they

sat apart, heavy-eyed and miserable, and bitterly regretful of the past. Even the seamen noted that something was wrong ; but spoke of "a tiff," with knowing winks to each other. They thought it quite according to rule that the two whom they counted as lovers, should quarrel and make it up a hundred times a day.

Only, in this case, there seemed no making up at all, and the sailor-men were naturally aggrieved.

Scarsdale sometimes wondered whether this state of things was not intolerable ; and whether it would mend matters if he plunged down a precipice, or swam out too far. But he decided against violent

narrow life in his young days had developed in him an almost morbid conscientiousness, which, after being for some years overlaid with new impressions, had suddenly reappeared as a living thing. He fostered his conviction of his own guilt, and dwelt upon it night and day, as a thing which must mentally separate him from a woman's love. But Nora would have been surprised if she could have known how short a time he devoted to the other subject of which *her* mind was full. About the disposition of his fortune, Scarsdale never thought at all. He was perfectly satisfied with what he had been doing with it, although it did not come within the scope of his humility to justify himself in Nora's eyes. But being satisfied, he gave the matter very little attention. He wrote down Betty Carrington's name and address in a note-book, but made no further allusion to her existence. Nora thought that she had never seen a man so unexpectedly callous and impervious to all demands upon his sympathy.

It was about six days after the breach between them that their deliverance came. It was his watch, but sleepless nights and weary days had tried him so much, that he was almost asleep, when suddenly he heard a cry. It was Nora, standing up and waving

her arm in the air. Had she gone mad? No, no—he saw what had excited her: a trail of smoke once more upon the horizon, and this time it did not fade away. He looked again and again, and surely it seemed to be getting nearer; then, with a gasp, he set light to the beacon, which was only to be used when there was a fair chance of its being seen from afar.

And the drifting smoke and flames were seen by officers and men on board a big liner, that had gone a few points out of her course on account of a gale of wind which they had encountered during the previous night. The captain was annoyed at the appeal from the island, because

their arrival, they came swinging back to the ship, with a cargo of castaways—three men and one woman, at the sight of whom the passengers and the whole ship's company burst into a ringing cheer.

Nora was lifted on board the steamer in an almost unconscious state: the mixture of emotions which she had lately undergone, and the sudden relief of her rescue, had completely prostrated her strength. She kept her berth for the greater part of the voyage, and Scarsdale scarcely saw her again until the day when she stepped upon dry land.

CHAPTER XIX

SIR PHILIP'S PROPOSITION

IT was with grief and consternation that the Evelyns and their friends learned, after considerable delay, the fate of the *Argolis*. A boatful of the survivors had been picked up by a passing vessel some few hours after the catastrophe; and

and felt himself almost personally responsible for her death.

Poor Betty Carrington—she also felt that Nora's fate was an irreparable disaster. She had lost more than an ordinary friend, and did not know where to turn for another. She was still at the Vicarage: the children were her greatest comfort; but the work was hard, and Mrs. Neve's temper was very wearying—it was no wonder that Betty began to look as though all life and energy were dying out of her. Mrs. Neve commented severely upon her want of energy, and gave her twice as much as usual to do by way of keeping her up to the mark; but this was not exactly the best mode of treating a sensitive and delicate girl.

Sir Philip, crossing the park one morning in spring, saw a group of youthful persons busily employed in picking wild hyacinths, and crossed the sward in order to speak to them. To his great surprise, they were unaccompanied by their governess.

"Where's Miss Carrington?" he asked.

"Oh, she's in bed," said Gwendolen curtly.

"Is she ill?"

"Don't suppose so; governesses always like a fuss being made over them, don't they?"

"Miss Carrington is a friend of mine," said Sir Philip. "I never could believe her capable of any affectation."

"Oh, well," said Gwendolen, colouring, "I only meant that she wasn't very brilliant this morning, and mamma said she had better have her breakfast in bed."

"She fainted while she was getting up," put in Ted.

"Fainted?"

"Yes, dead off, Susan says. Susan fetched the

"Perhaps they would take things more quietly if you were to assist them by your amiability and consideration," said Sir Philip savagely. "Miss Carrington is very kind to you all, and does far more for you than you deserve."

"Hold on!" cried Ted. "That may do for Gwen, but it doesn't apply to me, Sir Philip. I don't give Miss Carrington any trouble at all, and she's awfully fond of me. Isn't she, kiddies? But Gwen's always cheeking her and saying nasty things."

"I'm not," said Gwen, with crimson cheeks.

"If you say nasty and unkind things to her," said Sir Philip with severity, "you must be indeed of an unamiable disposition. Miss Carrington has had great trials, and is as sweet and good to you as she can possibly be; and if you treat her badly, I can only say that I am sorry for you, and should be extremely sorry to be like you."

"We don't treat her badly," said Gwendolen, in a sulky voice.

"I hope you don't," said Sir Philip; "but I intend to ask her to leave you as soon as possible if she is unhappy and overworked, and you will then have to find another governess—probably one not half so pretty or so kind."

He walked on, feeling grimly confident that every word he said would be repeated to Mrs. Neve ; but he had not got far before a pair of heels came galloping after him, and he heard his name repeated in somewhat breathless accents. He turned round, to behold Ted panting in pursuit.

" I'm not sorry you spoke like that to Gwendolen," he said, " for she's a beast sometimes ; but look here, Sir Philip, I'm very fond of Miss Carrington, and so are all the rest of us, and we won't give her a bit of trouble if she'll stay."

" I don't suppose you mean to give her trouble,"

advised her to have her breakfast in bed. We spare no care or attention, Sir Philip, even to our dependants when any of them are ill."

"Miss Carrington is certainly worth all the care and attention you can bestow upon her," said Sir Philip with gravity. "I feel a special interest in her as my cousin Nora's friend, and now that Nora is no longer with us—"

"You have no news, I suppose?" said Mrs. Neve, with a new alertness of intonation. "Ah no, I suppose not. Poor, poor Nora! I suppose you have quite given up hope?"

"I have not," said Sir Philip, "but I must confess that very few share my hopes. I think that we may yet hear of her again."

"How pleasant to be so sanguine," said Mrs. Neve. "But the Vicar doesn't agree with you. He says that he thinks we shall never have poor Miss Lysaght back again. What a loss she will be!"

"I am afraid Miss Carrington feels it a good deal," said Sir Philip. "Will you be so kind as to allow her to come up to the Park this afternoon and have tea with my aunt? We shall be pleased to see the children too," he added mendaciously.

"Oh, how very kind of you! I'll send the

children by all means," said Mrs. Neve. "But I don't suppose Miss Carrington will be well enough to come to-day."

"In that case," said Sir Philip suavely, "we will put off the children, please, until Miss Carrington *can* come. I am afraid my aunt would be unequal to a party of children without their governess."

"Oh!—then I'll send Miss Carrington, of course," said the Vicar's wife. "I thought you might like her to have a quiet afternoon, that was all, since you are anxious about her."

"She will enjoy an afternoon with my aunt. I

it is only when the common task, the daily round of duty has to be performed, that you give way to imaginary ailments."

"I will not go if you would like me to stay at home," said Betty meekly. But Mrs. Neve had turned to the schoolroom door.

"I have nothing for you to do at home," she said. "Your place is with the children—to amuse and instruct. You will take them to the Park this afternoon, as you seem so well able to do so. I hope we shall have no more fainting fits."

There was strong condemnation in her tone; as though she thought it entirely Betty's own fault that she had fainted that morning.

It was a very white and spiritless Betty who went to the Park that afternoon, and Sir Philip frowned as he looked at the girlish face, so much thinner and sadder than it ought to be, and determined in his own mind that the time had come when he might throw wisdom to the winds.

He managed to get her away from the children after tea. He sent them to explore some attics, where he said there was a secret door if only they could find it; and then he led Betty into the library to await their return.

"Oughtn't we to go back to Mrs. Evelyn?" said Betty conscientiously.

"Don't you remember that my good aunt always goes to sleep for a little while after tea? You must not disturb her. This is a comfortable chair; let me put some cushions for you at your back."

"Thank you; that is delicious."

"And what have you been doing to yourself to make you so white and worn-looking?"

"Oh, nothing. Mrs. Neve thinks it very unreasonable of me to be so pale."

"Why do you stay?" said Sir Philip, almost angrily.

Sir Philip, looking at her with a kind of pity in his eye. "You don't look very happy yourself, you know."

"Nor do you," said Betty, with great quickness. "It is because of our—your—anxiety about dear Nora, is it not?"

"Yes—partly."

"Oh, is there anything else?"

"Yes, there is something else which makes me uneasy."

"Nothing very bad, I hope? I do trust you have no other real trouble, Sir Philip?"

The innocent kindness in her eyes almost took away his breath.

"I am a fool," he said, "and I am troubling you without meaning it. Shall I tell you what I am anxious about? I am anxious about you!"

"About me?"

"Yes, my dear, because you look so frail and white, and I wish I could do something for you to give you health and strength and the joy of living."

"You are very kind, Sir Philip."

"I have not many people to be kind to," he said, with a little sigh. "I used to get some

pleasure from Nora's enjoyment of life, but now it seems as if I could not add to anybody's well-being. And when I look at you I think of her, for I am sure she would be sorry to see you looking as you do."

"You will make me think myself quite ill soon, and Mrs. Neve won't be at all pleased," said Betty, smiling languidly.

"I don't think you are ill, but you want care. Will you not let me take care of you, Betty?"

"Sir Philip!"

"Don't think me impertinent, dear. You are—almost a child compared with me! but if only

you, Betty, with all my heart. Could you not forget that I am so old, so uninteresting, so different from your sweet self? I would do anything in the world to please you, dear child."

"It cannot be, really it cannot be, Sir Philip! Oh, please do not speak to me about it again."

The tears were in her eyes, and the colour came and went fitfully in her cheeks. Seeing her agitation, Sir Philip tried to make the best of a bad business.

"I am sorry you won't think of it, my dear. But never mind. We won't refer to it again. I had not the least idea that my proposition would upset you. There, dry your eyes and smile again, or the children will all be asking what is the matter."

"You are sure you are not angry, Sir Philip?"

"Why should I be angry?" said Sir Philip cheerfully. "It is all right. Let me see that smile again, or I shall really be distressed. Oh, by the way, I see the telegraph boy in the drive. I will just go to see what he has brought."

In a moment or two he was back again, waving a telegram form in his hand.

"Can you bear good news, Betty? It is as I

thought; we have not lost our Nora; she has been saved. You shall see the telegram first of all."

And Betty read :

"Rescued from island by steamer safe and well.
Shall visit West Indies and States as arranged.
—Nora."

"I think she hardly realises how anxious we have been," said Betty wistfully.

CHAPTER XX

A WARNING

CERTAINLY Nora did not altogether grasp the fact that she had been mourned as dead, or she might have hastened homeward a little more speedily. As it was, she said to herself that it was a pity to return when she had gone so far and undergone so much, and that she might as well pay that projected visit to Martinique, which had been suggested to her by the Count de Ruvigny. At the port of Monte Video, whither the steamer which received her was bound, she came across one or two of the former passengers of the *Argolis*, and heard from them many stories of the desolation and discomfort of the survivors. Mrs. Amber had been one of the most fortunate. She had managed to put on all her jewellery and to secrete some gold in a canvas bag; and when she landed, she was able to pursue her travels without

delay. She and the Professor had gone to New York.

Nora hesitated for a time as to her course of conduct. Then she fixed upon a respectable, middle-aged lady at Monte Video, as exactly the right person for a chaperon; and having secured her services, she cabled to Philip for remittances, and set her friend to make inquiries about steamers. After a time, she found what she wanted — a boat that would take her to Martinique.

She was annoyed to find that Mr. Scarsdale was going in the same direction. He had taken a

was unhappy. But *how* they knew, it was difficult to say.

She told Mrs. Parsons, in a moment of expansion, that she had a friend at Martinique—a Belgian Count, who was Vice Consul, or something of the sort; but she regretted her confidence afterwards, as Mrs. Parsons mentioned the fact quite innocently at luncheon one day on board the *Toreador*. There were so few passengers that almost every word that was spoken at table could be heard by all present; and Nora, flushing deeply, noticed that Mr. Scarsdale gave a start and looked at her involuntarily as if he wished to speak. Then he seemed to remember that they were scarcely on speaking terms, and devoted himself to the fruit upon his plate.

After lunch, Nora noticed that he had captured Mrs. Parsons, and was talking to her for some little time. Inwardly angry, she was determined not to show her vexation, and sat in a comfortable deck-chair with her eyes closed as though she slept. After a time she heard Mrs. Parsons come up to her and seat herself rather stertorously at her side. Nora opened her eyes and smiled; she wanted very much

to know what Julian Scarsdale had said to Mrs. Parsons.

That good lady was not long in making known what she had heard.

"That Mr. Dale seems a very nice man," she said. "Was he not the gentleman with whom you were cast upon a desert island, my dear? How romantic, was it not? But you do not seem on very good terms with him; I have not noticed that you converse."

"No, we don't converse," said Nora languidly.

"How curious! but perhaps he presumed a little?" said Mrs. Parsons, with a smile. "One

especially with the gentleman whom you mentioned to me, the Belgian vice-consul."

"Oh, Mr. Dale knows him?"

"He says so, my dear—knows him quite well, and does not like him at all."

"Did he tell you to tell me this?"

"Not exactly; but he did intimate, dear, that perhaps you ought to know. This M. de Ruvigny, although of good family, seems to be nothing better than a black sheep—"

"Mrs. Parsons," said Nora, "I wonder whether you would oblige me by bringing Mr. Dale to me here, and letting me talk to him alone for a minute or two. I should like to ask him a question with regard to the Count de Ruvigny."

Mrs. Parsons did her mission with alacrity, and then removed herself and her knitting from Miss Lysaght's vicinity. Julian took off his hat, and stood with it forgetfully in his hand, looking down on Nora with a kind of melancholy reluctance which touched her a little in spite of herself. She felt that she had a difficulty in speaking; her throat was dry and thick.

"Mr. — Dale," she began, with a slight pause between the two words, "I should be much obliged to you if you would speak to me, instead of to my

companion, if you have anything important to say. She is a kind, nice woman, but she has no tact; and one never knows whether she will not blurt out all one has said—in a very embarrassing manner sometimes. Therefore, it is better to come to me. May I ask you what you wish to say about my friend the Count de Ruvigny?"

"Your *friend*, did I hear you say, Miss Lysaght?"

"My friend, certainly."

"I must say I am sorry to hear you say so."

"Indeed. Is it customary for one man to vilify another behind his back?"

"I am not vilifying the Count de Ruvigny," said

"Married?"

"Yes, of course; did you not know that he was married?"

"A man may love his wife," said Nora enigmatically.

"Or he may represent that he has lost her, in order to carry out his own private ends."

"How do you know whether she is living or not?"

"She was living," said Julian quietly, "six months ago. I saw her with him in London."

This shot told. Nora turned scarlet and then pale. Six months ago? It was then that the Count had been paying his attentions to her. She sat more erect in her deck-chair as she made her reply:

"You insinuate a great deal, Mr. Scarsdale. May I ask what is your object?"

"My object at present is to beg you not to visit the Count de Ruvigny's house when you reach Martinique. I don't know whether his wife is with him or not, but even if she were—there would be scandal. Madame la Comtesse has not a much better reputation, I fear, than her husband."

"I don't suppose she is with him now. I believe she is dead."

Julian bowed. "As you will," he said; "I have done my best."

He turned and was about to leave her when she called him back.

"Why do you persecute me?" she said, in a trembling voice. "Why can you not let me alone? You have come on board this boat simply to dog my footsteps; and when you get an inkling of my destination you put yourself out to make division between the Count and me."

"The Count—and you!" said Julian slowly, as if he could scarcely believe his ears. "But what possible connection could there be between you and the Count de Ruvigny?"

"I am engaged to him," said Nora sharply.

little love-making and a good deal of flirtation. She lay very still and wished that she were dead. She didn't exchange another word with Scarsdale for the rest of the voyage, good, bad, or indifferent.

Martinique was reached at length, and when Nora beheld the charming bay, the clusters of white-walled houses set in verdure, and the smiling beauty of the scenery, she recovered her spirits. After all, the place was worth visiting ; she need not see any more of the Count than she pleased, and she could have the satisfaction of seeming, at least, to disregard Julian's warnings. She disembarked, and went to the best hotel the place contained, and almost before she had changed her dress she received the announcement that the Count de Ruvigny was begging to pay his respects on her arrival. He was downstairs—would madame receive or not? Madame decided to receive.

She wondered why it was that Gérard de Ruvigny seemed so different from what he had been in London. Was he really changed? He seemed smaller, more *petite*, more smiling and insincere ; it was suddenly borne in upon her that she hated him with her whole heart, and wanted to get away from

him. Fortunately, Scarsdale had put a weapon into her hands.

De Ruvigny began by paying compliments, which he soon saw that she did not appreciate. She retained her air of lofty indifference while he spoke.

"You will accept the hospitality of my poor home, while you are here, will you not?" he murmured.

"I am afraid we should inconvenience Madame la Comtesse," said Nora gently.

"Madame la Comtesse! Of whom do you speak?" said the Count.

His eyes sparkled and the moustaches on his face

has maligned me. I can see that very well. I shall have my little revenge on the person who has injured me in your eyes."

"By all means," said Nora amiably. "You are quite at liberty to do as you please in that respect ; only I don't think that you know the name of any person who has mentioned me to you."

"I shall soon learn," said the Count. "And I shall make him remember, too."

"Then your wife is not here, monsieur? I hoped I might make her acquaintance."

"Nora, this is nonsense. You know that I have no wife living, and that you are my betrothed. You have come here, I hope, to fulfil your promise and marry me."

"I made you no such promise," said Nora firmly, "although I acknowledge that I let you talk a good deal of rubbish to me. But—marry you, M. le Comte de Ruvigny? No."

"You are keeping your fascinations, I understand, for the gentleman who made such an agreeable companion on your desert island? *Ma foi*, I wish I had been there."

"As I am very busy," said Nora briskly, "I will wish you good morning, Count. I do not

think I shall have time to see you again! We leave Martinique almost immediately. Good-bye."

"Au revoir, mademoiselle."

He bowed himself out with profound deference, and Nora waited for him to go with a little contemptuous smile upon her lips, which drove him almost mad with fury. "Who has done it? who has come between us?" he muttered, as he found himself in the shady street below the balconied hotel. "Whom shall I blame for this?"

Looking round him, he beheld the tall, lithe figure of a man whose face he knew. Julian Scarsdale was standing within the door of another

CHAPTER XXI

BETTY'S CHARITIES

BETTY held the letter in her hand for a few minutes, and then put it down. She looked a little bewildered, but rather pleased. And well might she look pleased, for the letter spoke of good fortune such as she had not experienced for years.

There was a sum of thirty thousand pounds, it seemed, waiting her acceptance. It was said to be from debtors of her father, who had at last determined to ask his daughter's acceptance of that sum, and said that they had been searching for her for the last twelve months without avail. The letter, which was from a lawyer, also said that the debtors wished to withhold their names; but that Miss Carrington might depend on it that the money was legally hers. In case Miss Carrington should be in want of ready money, the solicitor begged to enclose a cheque for fifty pounds.

Betty was bewildered. She thought it best to consult Sir Philip, who still remained her very good friend; and he found no flaw in the lawyer's letter, although it seemed to astonish him a good deal.

"I'm glad the debtors are so honest," he said. "Well, Betty, there's nothing to be done but enjoy your wealth. If you like, I'll go to London for you and see the solicitor; perhaps he will tell me the name of the person from whom this money comes."

But the solicitor proved irresponsive. He had been requested to say nothing as to the source of the money, but he begged to assure Sir Philip

"But won't you be depriving yourself of what is good for you? You want rest and comfort."

"Oh, not so much as you think. Besides, I shall enjoy the feeling that I have now enough to live upon; and there are a few little things that I can do without telling anyone. I want to see one or two people astonished," said Betty, with a soft, yet mischievous little laugh.

So Philip stood aside and watched. And all at once he heard that various people in the village were having mysterious presents, with no word to show where they came from. There was a poor woman who wanted a mangle, for instance; well, the mangle was miraculously standing at her back door when she opened it one morning. A sick girl became possessed of an invalid chair, and some motherless children received toys. Sir Philip smiled to himself, and said nothing. Betty's fancy was sweet to him, and he would not interfere with it for the world. But he did not quite approve of an elaborate brass lectern for the church, nor of a beautiful set of furs for Mrs. Neve, and a violin for Gwendolen, besides minor gifts for the younger children. He thought that Betty was going a little too far.

"You must not be extravagant," he said to her one day when he met her on the road.

"I'm not," she said, with a start. "What do you mean?"

He laughed, and would not tell her; but she saw that he had guessed.

As she went along the road, her thoughts turned to these unknown creditors of her father. She hoped in her own mind that the Scarsdales were not numbered among them, and then she rebuked herself for the thought. Perhaps they were wishful to make reparation for what they had done amiss. Was she to stem the tide of their repentance?

"No, thank you, madam. I do not want money; I want work," said the man quietly.

Betty thought that he had the accent of a gentleman.

"What can you do?" she said.

"I can work with my hands. It is nearly time for the hay harvest; perhaps I could get work then."

"I daresay you could; but I should have thought you would prefer skilled labour of some sort," said Betty.

"I will take anything I can get," he replied.

"Then," said Betty, "you should go to Sir Philip Evelyn, the lord of the Manor, and ask him for work. He lives at the Park. Can you find your way?"

"I think so, thank you, madam."

"And will you say—please—that Miss Carrington sent you?" Betty asked, turning a little pink as she sent a message which she knew would not fail in its effect.

She passed on, scarcely noticing that the stranger had made a sudden movement, as if he were startled by what she had said.

"Carrington!" he ejaculated, as he turned away.

"I did not know that she lived down here. My associations with this place concerned somebody quite different."

And then he fell into the long, lazy stride which seems natural to long-limbed men, and sped on his way to Sir Philip Evelyn's abode.

Philip encountered Betty a day or two later, and questioned her about the man she had sent to him. "So you know nothing about him, really?"

"Nothing."

"I thought that you knew all about him, and were prepared to produce his character at any moment."

"I think he has a nice face," said Betty.

And in a short time Sir Philip said to her she had been perfectly right. The man was quite trustworthy, and was proving himself a treasure. And then Betty laughed triumphantly.

It was June now, and her time with Mrs. Neve was nearly up. She was to stay with the Evelyns, and be ready to welcome Nora home, for Nora had written to say that she was returning very shortly, though she did not actually name the day. And as the time drew near for Betty to go, a curious gloom fell over the Vicarage. The younger children shed tears when they heard that Miss Carrington was going away. Ted was wrappd in misanthropy ; even Mrs. Neve was depressed, and acknowledged that Miss Carrington was the most useful governess she had ever had, and she didn't know how they were to get on without her. And Gwen, the imperious, the scornful, was discovered to be shedding surreptitious tears one day, when she heard the date of Betty's departure alluded to. And nobody could be more surprised by these manifestations of regret than Betty Carrington herself.

Sometimes she came across the man for whom she had obtained work, and the more she saw of him the more she liked him. His manner was quiet and

respectful; his eyes were intelligent and honest. She was troubled sometimes by a likeness to someone whom she had seen: she could not tell where; but she was certain that she had met this man before. And there was no one to tell her that she had first seen him on board a steamer bound for the West Indian Islands, and that she and Nora had discussed the question of his looks, with an attention to detail which had no doubt helped to imprint his face upon her memory. He was known to the world of Oakhurst as John Dale; but Nora would have known him at once for Julian Scarsdale, the man with whom she had watched and waited on the

CHAPTER XXII

LOVER AND FRIEND

NORA came along the road, blithely as one that was glad to be home again. She had arrived a few days ago, and she had felt an almost ecstatic delight in her old home. But for some reason or other, that delight was waning a little. Once or twice she had even resented the dulness of the place, and to be herself, that she wished she could fly to the very ends of the earth again. And she had felt so irritable that evening that she had come out alone in order to walk herself into good temper and contentment once again.

A turn in the road, and she came to a keeper's cottage, where a man in gaiters and velveteen was leaning against a gate. A game-keeper, of course; she would have passed him by, but that he drew himself up and saluted as she passed. Then she looked at him, remembering what she had been told

"I am earning my
hope you will not mal

"This is folly. You

"No."

"Not a rich man?"

"No, a poor man r
not very rich even whe

"You were not? But

"Yes, I know they
mistaken."

"But surely you had
with an actuation of ast
relief, "I begin to see.
money away?"

"As far as I could—i

"But have you not

before I met you. You see you only told me what I ought to do, you did not ask me what I had done."

"I was very wrong," said Nora. The red burned in her clear cheeks. "In fact," she added vehemently, "I was a fool."

"No. You were perhaps a little hasty," Julian said.

"Then—why did you come here, of all places, to visit?"

"I had a curiosity to see Miss Carrington. And I wanted also to see the places and people you had described to me."

"Then—is it you who have given Betty a fortune without telling her from whom it comes?"

Julian looked embarrassed. He flushed a little as he replied:

"It is not a fortune; it is a very moderate sum; but it will provide for her needs. You see I had given a good deal away before I knew anything about her."

"Then—have you left yourself nothing?"

"I have a quaint old house in Cumberland, which came to me from my ancestors. The land is barren; it does not bring us anything to speak of; but some-day I hope to go back there and live out my life."

"Like a hermit," said Nora reproachfully.

"Well, could one have a better life? I have been tempted to become a Trappist; but after all—I love the Cumberland hills."

"How strange to meet you here!"

"May I give you a warning?" said Scarsdale very seriously. "You were angry with me once before, but I believe you acted upon what I said about the Count de Ruvigny. I want to tell you that he is here in the neighbourhood, lurking about at a country inn with some rough fellows who seem to be in his pay. I cannot help thinking that he is looking out for you."

He opened the gate for her, and she walked back into the park, almost without a word.

She had spoken to him without excitement, with perfect self-possession; but she felt as though hammers were beating in her brain. She did not know what to do or say; but as she walked around, she became possessed with the idea that she ought to acknowledge to him that she was wrong, and beg his pardon for the bitterness with which she had once repulsed him. All that bitterness had left her now. In the loneliness of the last few weeks, she had reflected on the complexities of character and circumstance; and she had come to the conclusion that she had been terribly mistaken in the estimate she had formed of Julian Scarsdale's character, and that it was one which she should have revered and not despised. It was time that she should let him know. And so, after walking for some hundred yards or so, she turned back again.

She could not see that someone was watching her. A man, concealed behind the rhododendron bushes which bordered the path she trod, gazed at her with strangely brilliant eyes and a savage grin of something like joy upon his face. He

was armed with a revolver, but he did not seem disposed to turn it against her. He only glared at her and grinned, and glared again.

"Ah, *ma belle!*" he muttered to himself, "I shall have payment yet for the way in which you flouted me. I always take payment for an insult; you shall pay me still. And who is this man with whom you were talking a little moment since? I must see his face, and then I shall know whether it is a lover of yours or not. And if it is a lover, then I will lay him low."

His grin was almost maniacal in its character. It was easy to see that his mind had become affected, and that it tottered even now upon its

"I could not until I had said something."

"Said something?"

"I wanted to tell you how ashamed of myself I felt—ever since that day at Martinique. I saw the Count, and he was most offensive; then I wanted to find you, but you had gone."

"Yes, when I had transacted my business, I went at once. I knew you did not wish to meet me everywhere."

"I would have given anything to meet you just then. I wanted to beg your pardon."

"Oh, no!"

"I did, indeed. The Count—did you see the Count?"

"Yes; to tell the truth, I was going to Martinique to see him and no one else."

Nora's eyes expressed surprise, but she did not like to question him. However, he proceeded to explain.

"I must tell you that the Count de Ruvigny was Mr. Carrington's second in the duel of which I have spoken to you. I had long desired to ask him one question—whether he thought that duel had been fairly arranged and carried out, or whether there was any unexpected reason for its fatal termination."

"And you asked him?—"

"Yes, I saw him—perhaps fortunately—before his interview with you. He was genial then and good-natured, as he expected you, I suppose! He laughed when I put the question."

"He laughed?"

"Yes—uproariously. 'You great fool,' he said, 'the lad never died of a wound at all. There was not a scratch on him; he died of heart disease.'"

"What, in the middle of a duel?"

"Yes; we were just beginning the third round. I thought I had pierced his chest, but it was only

added softly: "It is for your sake I am glad. But why did they not tell you at the time."

"They themselves were misled for the moment. And I was sent away hurriedly, and made the best of my way to South Africa. I had no news for months."

"So thought the worst of yourself, as you always do."

"It is my weakness, I suppose. But I am happier now."

"Could you not be happier still?"

"Yes, in many ways."

"If I were to tell you how sorry I have been—how I cared for you all the time—how ashamed I am of the things I said to you—"

"Ah, that is more than enough! Nora, are you mine—mine again? But I must not ask you, for indeed I am not rich enough to be your husband; you ought to marry a rich man."

"If you say another word on that subject, I will betray you to Betty, and then she will insist on giving you back that thirty thousand pounds. Haven't I enough for both of us?"

Her hands were on his shoulder, his arms stole round her waist and drew her close to him. But

as their lips met for the first time, they recked not of the malignant eye that watched them so closely. They knew nothing of the stealing, creeping figure, and the hand that clutched a deadly, silver-shining toy.

The report came behind the leaden messenger and the puff of smoke: Scarsdale flung wide his arms and fell, while the madman who had fired sprang out of the thicket, waving his weapon aloft, and shouted volleys of abuse. But when help came—for the shot quickly attracted attention—he fled from those who would have secured him, and at last in a lonely corner of the wood, turned

Betty Carrington, who learned from her friend the true story of the man whom she had hated in her ignorance, and helped in fact. Nora had decided that she should be told everything—everything, at least, except the whole story of Julian's generosity, for that they dared not tell. Betty thought that Scarsdale had helped those unknown debtors to pay their debt, but she did not know that Julian Scarsdale was the only debtor who paid at all.

Still, she forgave him the wrong of which she had supposed him guilty, and she forgave his father too. So that when Scarsdale was well on his way to recovery, he was pleased to find that Betty was now his friend. And with Nora for his love—a softened and chastened Nora now—what more could he ask or want?

CHAPTER XXIII

ENVOI

BUT one person was discontented still.

"I am neglected," said Sir Philip to Betty Carrington. "You are all taken up with Scarsdale. He's the best fellow in the world, but one may have too much of Scarsdale after all."

"Because, you know, you needn't think. There is a house quite ready for you. Isn't Oakhurst Park good enough?"

"I like the Park very much," said Betty, "But I don't want to *marry* the Park."

"No; I want you to marry me."

"Do you—are you sure you really do—care for me?"

"My dear, I love you with all my heart. If I were not so old I should say more—"

"You are *not* old!"

"Well, I am nearly forty; double your age my dearest."

"But you'll never be double my age again," said Betty, with a twinkle of fun.

So, after all, there were two weddings instead of one; and Betty had all the Neve girls as her bridesmaids, and Gwen was first and chiefest of all. Betty's conquest of the Neve family was complete. Mrs. Neve could never find anything to say against Lady Evelyn, when she remembered Lady Evelyn as the pale dowdy of her schoolroom, the uncomplaining victim of a double share of work.

And far away, on the Cumberland wolds, an old

wonders as she begins

“ You lived here,” said
her husband, “ thinking
and years when you
be very pure in heart
we shall go a step further

But Julian smiled.

“ I see it now,” he said
sunset, it will never fade

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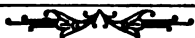
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By Mrs. BAILLIE REYNOLDS

Author of "Phoebe in Fetters"

Those who enjoyed Mrs. Baillie Reynolds' earlier novel, "Phoebe in Fetters," which met with considerable success, will probably expect to be entertained in a similar fashion by the present book, nor are they likely to be disappointed. The "Man who Won" is a powerful story, the scene of which is partly laid in Africa before the late war, and partly in England. The book contains a strong love-interest.

Meg the Lady

By TOM GALLON

This is, in all probability, the most remarkable and the most moving story that Mr. Tom Gallon has yet given to the public. It concerns two women—both young and both beautiful—yet placed apparently as far asunder as the poles, alike in regard to environment and birth and social status. Indeed, the one is placed in a position of the greatest ease and luxury; the other is one of that great army of the submerged and the lost. Yet, strangely enough, the one is forced, by curious circumstances, to take the place of the other; and the story concerns the way in which, fighting against desperate odds, she contrives to get back into her old secure life again. The author has dived deep into London for his characters, as usual; but the very remarkable dedication of the book would seem to point to the fact that the story really is a transcript from life.

New 6s. Novels

A New Important Novel

By LUCAS MALET

Author of "The Silence of Dean Maitland,"
"Sir Richard Calmady," etc.

[Early in 1906]

John Henry Smith, a Golfing Romance

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Author of "The Kidnapped Millionaires."

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"The best golfing novel written for years, interesting even to non-golfers. It is full of humour—refined and amusing—exceedingly bright and readable."—STANDARD.

"Mr. Frederick Upham Adams keeps his eye closely on human nature all through a heartily diverting book, which may be cordially commended to the attention of all in search of healthy laughter."—DAILY TELEGRAPH.

The Idol of the King

By CAPTAIN CURTIES

One of the great merits of this interesting "historical romance" is that the author has the gift of making his narrative appear as if it was historically correct. The story is supposed to have been written by a gentleman in waiting to Prince George of Wales, afterwards George III, who contracts a secret marriage with the heroine of the tale. It is a romance in which the king plays a finely human and ~~historically~~ ^{historically} kingly part.

New 6s. Novels

The Gambler

By Mrs. KATHERINE CECIL THURSTON

Author of "John Chilcote M.P."

With 8 full-page Illustrations from drawings by John Cameron.

"The Gambler" is a powerful story in which hereditary instinct largely influences the action of the heroine. It deals in a dramatic and exciting manner with an impoverished Irish family of the better class, and the love interest is strong. The book shows the author's exceptional ability to write a fascinating story, and is a worthy successor to her last book, "John Chilcote, M.P." [Early in 1906.]

The Breath of the Gods

A JAPANESE ROMANCE OF TO-DAY

By SIDNEY McCALL

Author of "Truth Dexter."

With full-page Illustrations.

With an original plot replete with striking situations, with its vividly painted scenes laid in Japan, and its strongly-contrasted types of character, the author displays a remarkable knowledge of Japanese life and manners, and presents what promises to be one of the most popular novels of the year.

Green Cliffs

By ROWLAND GREY

Author of "By Virtue of his Office," "The Unexpected," etc., etc.

A charming story of French and English life. The scene is laid upon the encroached coast of Brittany, and contains some vivid descriptions of Dinard in the height of the season, Saint Malo, and other pleasure resorts. There is comedy in the person of a small Parisienne of ten—there is pathos in the silent love of a deformed Frenchman for an English girl. The chief interest centres round a famous French novelist. There is plenty of lively dialogue, yet the conventional "happy ending" does not come quite without tears. The book is best described as an international episode.

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Author of "A Tangled G"

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By H. RIDER HAGGARD

Author of "King Solomon's Mines," etc.

"Renunciation" is one of the most powerful stories that has ever come from the pen of Mr. Rider Haggard. It is a novel of mingled character and romance: the story of a man who having by nature the best instincts, on the occasion of a tragic event, vows that he will renounce his habits of life and endeavour to live a life of duty, from which resolution he never swerves. [In March 1906.]

The Marrying of Gwendoline Jane

By Mrs. TOM GODFREY

"The Marrying of Gwendoline Jane" is a light comedy, amusingly told, and eminently readable. The heroine lives with her two grandmothers—one is a charming, dainty Marquise, the other a stiff, determined English gentlewoman of country family. The latter, Mrs. Vint-Hussey, has decided that Gwendoline shall marry Sir Sidney, a spruce, elderly suitor, who is rich, quite well-preserved, and eligible. When Gwendoline becomes engaged to Sir Sidney, the Marquise, who is romantic, is not at all pleased with the arrangement. The heroine, however, falls in love with a younger and more suitable man; but who she ultimately marries must not be disclosed here.

The Mother-Light

With a frontispiece.

"ANONYMOUS."

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